

FAITH AND ORDER 1985–1989

The Commission
Meeting at Budapest 1989

Edited by Thomas F. Best

148

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Faith and Order Paper No. 148
WCC PUBLICATIONS, GENEVA

The following papers were translated from French or German by the WCC Language Service: Fassinou, Tillard, Radke, Löser, Pannenberg, Ciobotea, Lochman, Minute of the Group Discussion on the Unity We Seek, Group I Report: Week of Prayer. The editor translated the paper by Forte

Cover design by Rob Lucas
Cover photo Len Sirman Press
ISBN 2-8254-0982-0

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150 route de Ferney, 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland
Printed in Switzerland

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Introduction:
Faith and Order
at Budapest

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Faith and Order: the Conference at Budapest

GÜNTHER GASSMANN

The Faith and Order Commission

What some critics still call a "privilege" is for others "the most representative theological forum in the world". Indeed, the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches (WCC) is not a "relic" from a time when the Faith and Order movement was one of the major expressions of the emerging ecumenical movement during the first half of this century. Faith and Order united in 1948 with the movement on Life and Work in order to form the WCC. With its 120 members representing WCC member churches but also several non-member churches, especially the Roman Catholic Church, the Faith and Order Commission has become since 1948 an indispensable instrument of the churches by constantly pointing to and serving the centre of the ecumenical vocation: the quest for the visible unity of Christ's church.

Through its comparatively large membership the Commission provides essential opportunities (a) to compensate for the very limited working facilities of the small Faith and Order Sub-unit (with only four executives) in the present WCC structure; (b) to implement the broad and demanding Faith and Order programme; (c) to inter-relate, through the involvement of its members, Faith and Order concerns with other ecumenical endeavours (e.g. bilateral dialogues, national and local ecumenical conversations, and our tasks in relation to united churches and union negotiations); and (d) to secure information, interpretation and participation in the churches with regard to the Faith and Order programme. Thus the meetings of the Commission every three or four years are not isolated larger gatherings, but moments in a participatory process. They are moments which are an occasion for "taking stock" of what has been achieved in a period of common work, and for considering the next steps on a difficult road which, nevertheless, has the promise of Christ's gift of unity and the assurance of the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Task and programme at Budapest

When nearly 180 Commission members and other participants assembled from 9 to 21 August 1989 in Budapest, Hungary, their first main task was to review the process and results of Faith and Order work since the first meeting of the present Faith and Order Commission at Stavanger, Norway, in August 1985.¹ In order to set the stage for this review participants heard first the paper of Bishop Patrick Rodger who served in the Faith and Order secretariat at the time of the 1963 Montreal world conference. We were all very sad that Bishop Rodger could not present his paper personally because of the death of his wife just a few days before the meeting started. His paper, and that of the moderator of the Commission, outlined the broader historical and theological context of the calling of Faith and Order, while the director in his report presented an overview of the present work with its achievements and hopes.

This work between 1985 and 1989 had its clear focus on three major projects. The first was the broad and ecumenically highly-significant process of discussion and response with regard to the 1982 Lima statement on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*.² The Commission was asked to reflect on the experience of this process, evaluate its impact and make suggestions for the revision of a draft report on "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry 1982-89: Report on the Process and Responses".³ A first preliminary result of the second project, that on "Towards the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today", had already been published in 1987 under the title *Confessing One Faith: Towards an Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as Expressed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)*.⁴ Here the Commission was asked to contribute to the further development of this project by clarifying once again its goal and by proposing aspects, also on the basis of the many reactions received, for a (final) revision of *Confessing One Faith*. A first result of the third project, on "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community", was presented to the Commission in the form of a draft study document with the same title.⁵ Accordingly, the Commission had the task of commenting on this draft in view of its revision and to consider the further course of this project.

Each of the three projects was introduced by several papers in plenary, and then several discussion groups dealt with specific aspects of the topic and with the texts submitted. The groups produced short reports which were presented, discussed and received in plenary. After the completion of this phase of the meeting the Commission spent a limited time in plenary, groups, and then again in plenary for the consideration of the

ongoing concerns of Faith and Order. It is important that these concerns — the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, united/uniting churches and church union negotiations, bilateral and multilateral dialogues — are supported by the whole Commission. They deserve more attention than we are generally able to provide.

The second main task of the meeting in Budapest was to consider themes and directions of future Faith and Order work (the group reports on the three major projects and the ongoing concerns were also oriented towards the work in the coming years). In this second phase of the programme, the same methodology was used as in the first. Plenary presentations introduced a number of topics for future work: unity and mission, the fifth world conference on Faith and Order, the unity we seek, the future role of Faith and Order, and ecumenical perspectives on ecclesiology. The presentations were followed by group work and the group reports were again discussed and received in plenary.

Experiences and results

This short general survey of the programme already indicates the enormous work-load with which the Commission had to struggle: eight thematic areas and three ongoing concerns. They reflect the scope of the Faith and Order programme and, as a consequence, had to figure on the agenda. About thirty papers, both long and short, were presented. This large number was foreseen in order to enable participants from different confessions and parts of the world to contribute their reflections to the issues under consideration. However here, too, our frequent experience was confirmed that papers generally take more time than planned for. Work in groups again proved, especially in such a large meeting, the best means for involving all participants in an intensive exchange of views. Time for groups was rather limited, and there was often no space left for the groups to review the reports before they were presented to plenary. Plenary debates were more than lively and the voices of practically all participants were heard.

Though there is no question that the outcome of debates and group work has suffered from lack of time, in a more general sense the Commission coped surprisingly well with its heavy agenda. This was helped by the fact that decision-making on the three major programmes was done already after the first four working days of the meeting, so that the last days were not overburdened by the not-uncommon but highly frustrating final rush of reports and decisions. Most important for the achievements of the meeting was, however, the experience that all

participants co-operated in a highly constructive and competent way in the process. This was certainly facilitated by the fact that most of them had been involved, in one way or another, in Faith and Order activities between Stavanger and Budapest and were thus familiar with the issues and methodologies involved.

The achievements and results of the Budapest meeting were, of course, also the achievements and results of Faith and Order work during the preceding four years. But achievements and results need to be tested, evaluated and further deepened. And that has happened at Budapest. This was obvious in the case of the BEM document and process, where the phase of a very broad involvement of Faith and Order has come to an end, even though the BEM process itself is continuing. To mark this "taking stock" the Commission drafted, revised and adopted a statement on "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry: the Continuing Call to Unity"⁶ and sent it to the churches. A second result in this area was the fairly substantial draft report on "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry 1982-89". Suggestions were made which have been most helpful in reviewing the structure and content of this report; a revised version will be published in 1990. Similarly it was essential for the progress of the study "Towards the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today" that the full Commission could evaluate the study document "Confessing One Faith" and its future shape, and re-affirm the goal of the study which might find one expression in a representative act of confessing the apostolic faith together. The situation with regard to the draft report on "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community" was different. Members of the Commission had so far been involved in specific elements of this study. The important step forward at Budapest was that, for the first time, the Commission saw and discussed the draft of a comprehensive study document which seeks to integrate the different elements of the study into a coherent theological text. This text is now, with the help of the Budapest reactions, being revised and prepared for publication.

A major result of the Budapest meeting was the general agreement and commitment to sharpen the profile of Faith and Order work in the coming years by making ecclesiology a leading motive and theme. This does not mean that a further study is being added to the continuing work on apostolic faith and on unity and renewal. Faith and Order has been and is involved in ecclesiological issues in most of its studies. What is new is that work on ecumenical perspectives on the understanding of the nature and mission of the church would provide an ecclesiological framework for the ongoing work on the two major studies, for important critical

issues arising from the responses to BEM (including themes such as women in the ministries of the church, and episcopal succession), and for dialogue on ecclesiological issues which have not yet been sufficiently treated (such as authority and structures of decision-making in the church). The over-arching theme of ecclesiology would not only serve as a basis for dealing with controversial ecclesiological issues and the understanding of the church as a whole, but also as the theological context in which the pressing issue of the church-world relationship can be considered in a more theologically focused way than has often been the case.

Not unconnected with this orientation for the future work of Faith and Order is the agreement by the Commission to hold the fifth world conference on Faith and Order in 1993, thirty years after the last world conference in 1963 in Montreal. This agreement arose out of the firm conviction, noticeable throughout the Budapest meeting, that Faith and Order must continue to play an important role within the ecumenical movement, but that this movement requires fresh initiatives and reshaped goals if it is to move into the twenty-first century as the most significant mark of modern church history. This high intention and hope will certainly require a well-prepared and intensive ecclesiological discourse at the world conference. It is the unity and mission of the Christian churches, and thus their credible historical role in God's purpose for his world at the turn of the new century, which is at stake. In connection with the world conference, but also at other moments at the Budapest meeting, many participants pleaded for the preparation and involvement of a new ecumenical generation and for the broadening of the range of Faith and Order participants by including more representatives of evangelical and pentecostal movements.

The setting of the Budapest meeting

Worship is an area which is part of the Faith and Order mandate but which has probably not received the attention it deserves during the last years. Worship is also an important occasion for listening and meditating in the hubbub of what are usually very lively conversations and discussions at Faith and Order meetings. Accordingly, the first words publicly spoken and heard at the Budapest meeting were words of scripture, proclamation, praise and prayer at the opening service on the evening of 9 August 1989. The service, held in the main Reformed church, Calvin Church, was prepared by Faith and Order and the sermon was preached by the Rev. Livingstone Thompson from Jamaica, a member of the

Central Committee of the WCC. For the closing worship on 20 August it was decided to join the normal Sunday congregation at the main Lutheran church, the Deak ter Church. Here several Commission members participated in the liturgy and Bishop Manas Buthelezi of Johannesburg preached. An Orthodox liturgy was celebrated on 15 August, the feast of the Dormition of Mary, the Mother of God. Each working day began with morning prayer, thus reminding us that all our reflections and discussions must be grounded in the presence and grace of God in Jesus Christ and can only be accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Commission met in Budapest, Hungary, and thus for the first time in a socialist country, which was experiencing a crucial moment of its history. Living for twelve days in its capital, participants were able to sense something of the dramatic changes in this country which is turning away from oppression to democracy and liberty. Participants were told about this difficult process by the head of the news service of Hungarian television, and the officers were received by one of the chief reformers, minister of state Imre Posgay, with whom they had a very personal and impressive conversation. The churches in Hungary, victims of past repression, are in the midst of this process of political and social renewal which is opening up for them many new opportunities for which they have not had time to prepare. The participants in the meeting were informed about these opportunities and difficulties during an encounter with leaders of the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Reformed, Lutheran and Free churches in Hungary. Participation in worship services on 13 August and conversations with members of the host congregations offered a further opportunity to learn more about the country and the life of the churches and to manifest our already existing fellowship beyond confessional and national boundaries. It was also in one of the institutions of the church that the Commission meeting was held: the Reformed theological seminary Rady Kollegium. Since Faith and Order loves to meet in places with a certain theological "smell" or ambience, the quiet island of Raday College in the centre of the bustling capital city contributed a great deal to the concentrated work that was required.

Places are important, but people are more important. In order to celebrate the community which has grown among Commission members and other participants over the last years, Faith and Order organized a lively and joyful reception at the Astoria Hotel at which our Hungarian hosts were also present. It was also an occasion to express thanks to all participants, and especially to those who will not continue as members of the new Commission after 1991. This departure of older members from

the Commission is also one of the reasons why Faith and Order is beginning to pay more attention to the involvement of “younger theologians” — and a dozen of them were invited to the Budapest meeting, which proved to be a highly successful and most appreciated step.

Thanks were certainly due also to the people who had “run” the meeting: to the group of stewards and the friendly staff of Raday College; to the two people responsible for local preparations and arrangements, Rev. László Lehel, general secretary of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary, and Rev. Istvan Thuroczy, administrative director of Raday College, as well as all their collaborators; and finally to the administrative and executive staff of Faith and Order, the “soul” of the whole enterprise. Three more names should be mentioned: president Dr Heinz Joachim Held, moderator of the Central Committee of the WCC, WCC general secretary Dr Emilio Castro, and WCC Programme Unit I moderator Prof. Todor Sabev. By their presence and contribution, the meeting was very much enriched and its significance for the whole of the WCC underlined. We are grateful for such good and supportive friends — and we have, fortunately, many more of them.

NOTES

Cf. Thomas F. Best ed., *Faith and Renewal: Reports and Documents of the Commission on Faith and Order. Stavanger 1985*, Faith and Order Paper No. 131, Geneva, WCC, 1986.

² Faith and Order Paper No. 111, Geneva, WCC, 1982.

³ “Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry 1982-89: Report on the Process and Responses”, FO/89:10, 1989.

⁴ Faith and Order Paper No. 140, Geneva, WCC, 1987.

⁵ “The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community: Draft Study Document”, FO/89:6, 1989.

⁶ See p.25 below.

Editor's Introduction

THOMAS F. BEST

This book forms the official record of the Faith and Order Plenary Commission meeting held in Budapest in August 1989. Its aim is to give, in a clear and open manner, the work done by the Commission in Budapest and the results which were achieved there.

This was the second meeting of the present Faith and Order Commission, and it stood in both continuity and contrast with the Commission's first meeting held in Stavanger, Norway, in August 1985 and recorded in *Faith and Renewal*.¹ Essentially the same persons met each time. But while in Stavanger the Commission's task had been to develop programmes, to chart Faith and Order's work until the next Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC), it came to Budapest with four solid years of work behind it, with substantial results from its three main study programmes and three "ongoing" concerns to be evaluated, and with some creative ideas for its vision and work even beyond the Assembly to the next Faith and Order world conference, now proposed for 1993.

In Budapest both process and product were important, and both are recorded in this report. There is a careful attempt to indicate the process and style of work, and the "status" of the results, in each of the many areas of study and reflection (in some cases there was sufficient time for groups to review the accounts of their discussion before they were presented in plenary, in other cases not; some statements or reports were "adopted" by the Commission, others "received"; some texts were intended for transmission to the churches, others to the appropriate programme steering groups, and so on).

The following arrangement of material has been adopted (there is some variation depending on the particular items presented and produced in each area of work). The background paper, plenary papers and responses are given, followed by an editorial explanation of the "process of reflection" which then took place. This indicates the division of commis-

sioners into working groups, and the status of the reports presented in plenary on behalf of these groups. The reports are then printed, followed by an account of "plenary discussion and action". These accounts do not pretend to be exhaustive, but do intend to give an accurate indication both of the central themes of the discussion and of the range of topics covered, and the views expressed, within them. They are based upon the plenary minutes taken by official minute-taker Stephen Cranford. The texts of the various motions offered, and the record of the Commission's action upon them, are taken from these minutes, as are the occasional quotations given in the discussion summaries.

The summaries themselves and accounts of the process, as well as the editorial work on the papers and responses, are all the responsibility of the editor of this volume. The group reports which are published here, however, are given as delivered in plenary, without editorial intervention.

Some reports (and some sections of others) have not been printed here but rather passed directly to the appropriate steering group or other responsible body within the Faith and Order Commission; and this reflects a decision of the Faith and Order secretariat rather than any one individual. Some of the reports consisted, entirely or in part, of highly detailed editorial suggestions for the revision of the draft results from the programmes on "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry"; "Towards the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today"; and "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community".² These draft programme results — running altogether to some 250 pages — were, of course, primary texts for the work in Budapest but are not printed here, being presently under revision (under the guidance of their respective steering groups and the Standing Commission) for publication in light of the Budapest discussion. The group reports (or sections of reports) consisting of detailed editorial suggestions for these programme texts have been transmitted directly to the appropriate bodies of oversight and are not printed here. Such cases are clearly indicated in the explanatory comments accompanying each area of work.

The complete text of all reports, and the latest form of the results from each of the study programmes, are of course available from the Faith and Order Secretariat, P.O. Box 2100, World Council of Churches, 150 route de Ferney, 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland.

Finally, it is my pleasure to thank all those who have contributed to this volume and particularly to my colleagues in Faith and Order who have worked, in various ways, to prepare the text for publication. Special thanks are due to former Faith and Order staff member Stephen Cranford

for his untiring, careful and accurate minute-taking in Budapest; and to the publications staff of the WCC, whose conscientious competence has enabled a very lengthy and complicated manuscript to see the light of day.

NOTES

¹ Thomas F. Best ed., *Faith and Renewal. Reports and Documents of the Commission on Faith and Order: Stavanger 1985*, Faith and Order Paper No. 131, Geneva, WCC, 1986.

² These texts are: "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry 1982-1989: Report on the Process and Responses", FO/89:10, 1989; "Confessing One Faith: Towards an Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as Expressed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381): Study Document", Faith and Order Paper No. 140, 1987; and "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community: Draft Study Document", FO/89:6, 1989.

Attendance

Officers

Prof. John Deschner, moderator
Metropolitan Bartholomew
Rev. Dr Horace O. Russell
Dr Mary Tanner
Rev. Fr Prof. Jean-M.R. Tillard

Members of the Commission

Pastor Samuel K. Ada	Dr (Ms) Kyriaki Fitzgerald
Deaconess Bela Ademola	Rev. Prof. Duncan Forrester
Rev. Dr S.T. Ola Akande	Rev. Dr Julia Gatta
Rev. Fr Joachim Alliende	Dr Beverly Gaventa
Bishop Ambrosius of Joensuu	Rev. Dr K.M. George
Rt Rev. T.S.A. Annobil	Archbishop Gregorios of Shoa
Dr Kamol Arayaprateep	Dr Salesi T. Havea
Prof. Torleiv Austad	Prof. E. Glenn Hinson
Dr Joyce H.E. Bailey	Rev. Prof. Thomas Hopko
Dr Robert W. Bertram	Dr Thomas Hoyt
Rev. Prof. André Birmele	Rev. Prof. Akira J. Imahashi
Rev. Plutarco Bonilla	Metropolitan Prof. John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon
Rev. Fr Frans Bouwen	Rev. Dr M.J. Joseph
Prof. Raymond E. Brown	Archbishop Dr Aram Keshishian
Rt Rev. Manas Buthelezi	Ms Aileen Khoo
Archpriest Prof. Nicolai Chivarov	Archbishop Kirill of Smolensk
Rev. Nancy Cocks	Rev. Dr Christoph Klein
Rev. Janet Crawford	Rev. Arthur Ko Lay
Rev. Martin Cressey	Rev. Fr Jacob Kollaparambil
Rev. Dr Paul A. Crow, Jr	Dr Mikolaj Kozlowski
Dr Raoul Dederen	Prof. Sung-Hee Lee-Linke
V. Rev. Prof. George Dragas	Rev. Coralie Ling
Mrs Lloyd Fanusie	Prof. Jan M. Lochman
Mrs Marguerite Fassinou	

Dr Zenaida Lumba
Rev. Harald Malschitzky
Rev. Dr Melanie May
Rev. Alberto Moises Mendez
Dr Andreas Mitsides
Rt Rev. Monsengwo Pasinya
Domprost Dr Kjell Ove Nilsson
Rev. Dr Elizabeth Nordbeck
Dr Peder Norgaard-Hojen
Mrs Rosemary Nthamburi
Prof. Alexei Osipov
Prof. Wolfhart Pannenberg
Dr Jorge Pantelis
Rev. Mrs Park Sun Ai
Rev. Dr Martin F.G. Parmentier
Rev. Janos Pasztor
Rev. (Mrs) C.E. Pattiasina-Toreh
Prof. Vlassios Pheidias
Rev. Dr Juha Pihkala
Rt Rev. Victor Premasagar
Rev. Ursula Radke
Prof. Paolo Ricca

Prof. Dietrich Ritschl
Rev. Aracely E. de Rocchietti
Rt Rev. Barry Rogerson
Rev. Dr William G. Rusch
Dr Letty Russell
Rt Rev. Dr Paul-Werner Scheele
Protopresbyter Guram Shalambidze
Rev. Dr Einar Sigurbjörnsson
Rev. Dr Robert F. Smith
Rev. Prof. Josef Smolik
Ms Veronica Swai
Rev. Dr William Tabbernee
Prof. Evangelos Theodorou
Rev. Dr Wolfgang Ullmann
Ms Vibila Vuadi
Dr Günter Wagner
Prof. Geoffrey Wainwright
Ms Marthe Westphal
Prof. Gayraud Wilmore
Rev. Dr Robert J. Wright
Prof. Yemba Kekumba
Rev. Dr Yeow Choo Lak

Proxies

Rev. René van den Beld (for Dr L.A. Hoedemaker)
Rev. Dr Dan-Ilie Ciobotea (for Bishop Timotei Sevciciu)
Rev. Cornelia Coenen-Marx (for Prof. Gisela Kittel)
Prof. John Erickson (for Prof. Thomas Hopko (15-21 August))
Rev. Fr Prof. Bruno Forte (for Prof. Luigi Sartori)
Rev. Peter Lenkoe (for Rt Rev. Desmond Tutu)
Dr Liem Khiem Yang (for Rev. Augustina Lumentut)
Prof. Werner Löser (for Rt Rev. Prof. Walter Kasper)
Prof. Antonio G. Mendonça (for Rev. Dr Jaci Maraschin)

Apologies

Rev. Alfred Bayiga
Protopresbyter Prof. Vitaly Borovoy
Dr George Bebawi
Rt Rev. Prof. Noah Dzobo
Rev. Jacqueline Grant
Ms Frieda Haddad
Prof. Dr L.A. Hoedemaker
Rev. Fr David Kapkin
Rt Rev. Prof. Walter Kasper

Prof. Dr Gisela Kittel
Prof. Ulrich Kühn
Dom Emmanuel Lanne, OSB
Prof. Nicolas Lossky
Rev. Augustina Lumentut
Rev. Dr Jaci Maraschin
Rev. Canon Martin Mbwana
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Consultants

Dr Randall C. Bailey (Progressive National Baptists)
 Rev. Fr René Beaupère (Roman Catholic Church)
 Dr Roberta Bondi (United Methodist Church, USA)
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 Rev. Dr Lothar Coenen (Evangelical Church in Germany)
 Mr John Cole (Roman Catholic Church)
 Dr Midic Dobrivoye (Serbian Orthodox Church)
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 Rev. Prof. Thomas Fitzgerald (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America/Ecumenical Patriarchate)
 Dr Anton Houtepen (Roman Catholic Church)
 Rev. Lorna Lock-Nah Khoo (Methodist Church, Singapore)
 Mr Konstantinos Kornarakis (Church of Greece)
 Bishop Dr Mesrob Krikorian (Armenian Apostolic Church/Etchmiadzin)
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 Rev. Dr Abraham Kuruvilla (Mar Thoma Syrian Church)
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 Dr Cecil M. Robeck (Pentecostal Church)
 Dr W.A. Roeroe (Sulawesi Churches)
 Rev. Turid Karlsen Seim (Church of Norway)
 Dr David T. Shannon (National Baptist Convention)
 Rev. Prof. Paul Tarazi (Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch)
 Rev. Livingston Thompson (Moravian Church in Jamaica)
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 Dr George Vandervelde (Reformed Church)
 Rev. Fr Dr Gerhard Voss (Roman Catholic Church)
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Prof. Geoffrey Wainwright (World Methodist Council)

Apology: Colonel William Clark (Salvation Army)

Special guest

Rev. Dr Heinz Joachim Held (moderator of Central Committee, WCC)

Members of the Faith and Order secretariat

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Rev. Prof. Wilhelm Wuellner



The Faith and Order Commission, Budapest, August 1989

Statements
by the Commission

A Statement to the Churches from the World Council of Churches Faith and Order Plenary Commission Budapest, Hungary, August 1989

1. The members of the Faith and Order Commission greet the churches in the name of Christ and pray his prayer, "Grant that we may be one, so that the world may believe".

The venue

2. The Faith and Order Plenary Commission met in the city of Budapest. There was great significance in the choice of this venue, both geographically and politically. The modern city of Budapest is made up of two ancient, culturally diverse cities: Buda, which was at the edge of the old Roman empire, and Pest. During the last century the separate cities were joined into one by a series of bridges across the Danube.

3. The Hungarian people are in the process of experiencing significant changes which have presented our host community with a "crisis of possibilities". The symbols of building bridges and the openness to possibilities ("bridges and possibilities") provided a backcloth to our deliberations as we, from different backgrounds, worked on ways by which the churches on earth might be united. We pray for the people of Hungary, for the renewal and unity of their country, and give thanks to God for the friendship and hospitality we have received from many congregations and individuals.

4. The 120 members of the present Plenary Commission, who had first met in Stavanger, Norway, in 1985, were joined by consultants, liaison officers and, for the first time, a group of younger theologians. Previous meetings of the Plenary Commission had already seen the importance of the greater representation and participation of members from the third world and of women. The confident witness of the many new members has enriched and widened our view of the nature of the church and the working out of God's purpose of salvation.

Trying to be faithful

5. During one of our acts of worship a story of the great composer Igor Stravinsky was told. Towards the end of his life he composed an orchestral work that required an extended violin solo. At the rehearsal an eminent violinist struggled to get the music right. In the end the frustrated musician said to Stravinsky: "Maestro, I have to tell you that this piece cannot be played the way you have written it." Stravinsky replied: "I know. What I am after is the sound of someone trying to play it." The task given to Faith and Order in all its work is "to proclaim the oneness of the church of Jesus Christ and to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and in common life in Christ, in order that the world may believe" (Faith and Order By-laws, 2). The music may still sound as though we are only trying to play it; but we continue to try, being faithful to our task.

The task for the present

6. The visible unity of the churches is the goal of all the three main Faith and Order studies. The common confession of the apostolic faith is an essential condition and element of this unity. Neither can there be visible unity without a common recognition of baptism, without eucharistic fellowship, without a mutual recognition of ministries and common structures of decision-making. The unity of the church reflects the unity of the Triune God as it appears in the mystery of God's saving action in Jesus Christ for the unity and renewal of all humankind and creation.

The three studies are:

Baptism, eucharist and ministry

7. Seven years have passed since the World Council of Churches Central Committee sent the Faith and Order convergence document on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM) to the churches for their official responses. The many reactions received so far (i.e., 185 official responses to date) have been published in six volumes, and the Commission has prepared a summary and evaluation of the process and the responses. As never before the results of Faith and Order's work have been taken up by the churches and ecumenical groups at many levels of their life. Despite different degrees of acceptance, BEM has become a document of continuing importance to many churches and to their growing together towards unity. We are encouraged by this for our further work and rejoice that God has given us to each other as co-workers in

overcoming our divisions, while expressing our gratitude to all those who with great commitment have participated in the still ongoing process.

8. The Commission examined the convergence emerging from the responses and agreed on a statement on "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry: the Continuing Call to Unity", to be presented to the next Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Canberra, Australia, in 1991. It also took advice for its further work, calling for a broadly based study on the understanding of the nature, structures and mission of the church.

Apostolic faith

9. The demanding study "Towards the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today" is a call to interpret and affirm in the contemporary situation the apostolic faith as historically expressed by the church in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed of AD 381. Aiming at a common explication, recognition and confession of the faith, the first step has been taken by a draft document "Confessing One Faith", outlining a biblical and contemporary explication of each article of the Creed as it is related to the challenges of today's world. As was clear from the emerging discussion in the meeting, the text still needs substantial revision and improvement before the document may be presented to a Faith and Order world conference in 1993. While recognizing the difficulty of the task, the pain of our divided lives is urging us to express humbly our willingness to undertake the demanding search for a common expression of faith. We do this in the hope that from God's hand we shall receive together the gift of unity in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit and be renewed in the task of witnessing to that unity in the world.

Unity and renewal

10. For the first time the Plenary Commission had a text of "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community" to discuss. This was a significant step forward as the strands from consultations held in every continent had been woven together. The study has drawn upon the experiences and reflections of Christians from all over the world, especially in the areas of justice and the community of women and men in relation to our understanding of the church and humanity.

11. The text holds up a mirror to our churches so that under the judgment and grace of God we may be renewed and become what we were meant to be. As a community we are to be an effective sign and instrument of the kingdom of God for the sake of the unity and renewal of humankind in God's creation. The text will need to be revised and it is

hoped that it will be ready in a preliminary form to be part of the preparation for the Canberra Assembly and a major item on the agenda of the world conference.

Some tasks for the future

12. As the Canberra Assembly approaches Faith and Order will prepare a major contribution on "The Unity We Seek", while the three studies will find their appropriate place. For nearly thirty years the Commission on Faith and Order has not had a world conference. Now the time is right for the holding of the fifth world conference in 1993. The theme is likely to be centred on a credible communion in faith, life and witness. It is hoped that we may take this opportunity to invite the participation of a wide range of churches beyond the present constituency of the World Council of Churches.

13. The Commission continued to pay attention to its ongoing work including the concerns of the united and uniting churches, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and the relationship between bilateral and multilateral conversations.

Trying to be faithful

14. Some day the music provided may sound as if we are not only "trying" to play it. What now seems impossible may happen: that glorious unity of the people of God throughout the world. We invite you to continue this demanding exercise: an exercise of prayer, of work and witness with Christians of other communities so that we may play our part in the search for the unity which is God's alone, not only to be visible in the community of churches, but for the unity and renewal of all creation.

Let us continue to be faithful.

Budapest, Hungary, 21 August 1989

Plenary Discussion and Action

A proposed statement had been brought to the plenary, at the invitation of the officers of Faith and Order, by Turid Seim and Barry Rogerson. Following discussion and revision the above text was adopted unanimously by the Plenary Commission for publication.

Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry: the Continuing Call to Unity

A Statement by the Faith and Order Commission
Addressed to the Churches

I. Moving into unity

1. The Faith and Order Commission, a servant of the churches, meeting in Budapest in August 1989, thanks the churches for the serious manner in which they have studied and responded to *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. The responses received have been closely studied by the Commission, as will be responses still to come. The responses have been published in six volumes. The Commission has now prepared a comprehensive summary and evaluation of the process and the responses to date in *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry 1982-89: Report on the Process and Responses*, to be published in 1990. The Commission rejoices at the manifold evidence that BEM is not only stimulating discussion and dialogue between the churches, but is also enabling them to grow closer together in their life, worship, and mission. The Commission re-affirms its commitment to serve the churches on the pilgrimage to visible unity.

2. When the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches completed its work on the *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* text in January 1982 in Lima, Peru, no one foresaw the interest which the BEM statement would evoke in the Christian community. No one envisaged the impact which it would have within and among churches of such diverse historical origins and such varying traditions. This fruit of many years of ecumenical discussion has become the most widely distributed, translated, and discussed ecumenical text in modern times. Some 450,000 copies translated into 31 languages have been studied in a huge variety of situations around the world. Over a thousand written reactions have so far been published. Never before have more than 180 churches reached out to each other by responding officially to an ecumenical document. Never before have so many from theological faculties, confessional families, ecumenical groups, local congregations, and discussion groups of lay and ordained persons joined together in

studying the same modern ecumenical document. In their willingness to understand and approach this task in a positive spirit, all have offered a sign of commitment to our common movement towards the visible unity of the church for which Christ prayed and which has its deepest roots in the communion of the Trinity.

3. For all this we invite you to join us in giving thanks to God.

II. Advances in unity

4. The churches' response to BEM has created a new ecumenical situation. BEM came at a moment when the churches were looking for a new way forward towards unity. It spoke to issues close to the life and faith of people in our communions. It expressed broad convergence on basic Christian affirmations and revealed sometimes surprising agreements.

5. In many churches' responses to the BEM document this convergence was affirmed. We find general gratitude in the responses for the Trinitarian basis of the Lima statement — a firm agreement that baptism, eucharist and ministry are all rightly understood as enacted and enabled by God in the unity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Virtually all agree on the Trinitarian shape of baptism, that by God's grace and power the person baptized is incorporated into Christ's body and anointed by the Holy Spirit. There is growing agreement on the centrality of the eucharist or Lord's supper in the life of the church. This celebration always includes the proclamation of God's word together with the supper as one action in which Christ is present. In this celebration, not only Jesus' last supper with the disciples but the whole of God's creating, redeeming and sanctifying action through Christ is recalled. The churches agreed in affirming BEM's approach to ministry in terms of our shared baptism and the calling of the whole people of God. There was common approval for the description of the responsibilities of the ordained ministry and for the emphasis on the personal, collegial and communal dimensions of the exercise of ministry. For all the sections of the text, the churches offered general affirmation of the strong confession of the ethical dimension in the church's worship which links it with living faithfulness in the world. They affirmed the clear grounding of all these aspects of the BEM text in the holy scriptures.

6. We acknowledge with joy that BEM has taken a place in the internal life of many churches, becoming part of the process by which some teach and pass on the apostolic faith. Churches are allowing BEM to stimulate them to critical discussion of their own traditions and practices. They show a willingness to change perceptions of other communions' beliefs,

worship and practices. For many churches BEM has become the occasion for specific commitments to renewal and enrichment in their own faith, practice, ecumenical relations and missionary witness.

7. As a convergence statement composed by people from separated churches and diverse traditions, BEM calls neither for surrender, nor compromise, nor total acceptance, and certainly not for ambiguity or confusion. It calls rather for common affirmations by divided churches struggling towards universal communion. BEM treats three subjects but with one theme: the visible unity of Christ's body. In their responses the churches have engaged with each other at a new level. And they have offered each other a basis for new relationships. Thus the process of response is itself a visible sign of our movement into unity.

8. For all this we invite you to join us in giving thanks to God.

III. Further steps ahead

9. The BEM process manifests a growth in unity. Its continuation is a key to further growth into unity. But we still have far to go. We encourage the churches to take further steps together in a partnership of response and dialogue.

10. There are those churches and Christians who have not participated in the BEM process or who have been fundamentally critical of it. We need their contribution and hope to deepen our dialogue with them, for the sake of our common faithfulness to our Lord's prayer that we all may be one, that the world may believe.

11. There are areas of difficulty which remain in need of further clarification and reflection. There are areas of disagreement in understanding and practice which persist despite discussion, study and prayer. These were noted in the responses of many churches. Some examples would be the relation of word and sacrament, the understanding of sacrament and sacramentality, the threefold ministry, succession in ministry, the ministry of men and women, the relation of scripture and Tradition, and ecclesiology. In rejoicing at the new situation brought about by the responses to BEM we do not minimize the seriousness of these and other questions. They remain issues that keep many of our churches and people apart and they require further work.

12. The issues raised by the churches in their responses have stimulated Faith and Order to initiate a study of ecclesiology. The Commission's major projects on the apostolic faith and the unity of the church and the renewal of human community are significant contributions to and participation in the ongoing BEM process.

IV. Seeking fuller visible unity

13. If the affirmations made by the churches in their responses are given their full value we will see an increasing number of practical steps towards unity among the churches. It is still early in this process. The churches may ponder the responses of the other communions and indeed of their own and embody their new understanding in changed relationships. We await this with expectation and a good hope that the churches will act on this opportunity so that the special gift of this moment is not lost.

14. What we are experiencing in the BEM event is an outpouring of God's blessing. We believe the churches are determined to deepen and extend the communion of sharing, celebration, mutual challenge and dialogue which has arisen around BEM. We are full of hope that as the churches study and receive each other's responses to BEM there will be a new season of grace, that the commitments of our common faith which these responses show will lead to acts of unity, deepening of relationships, and community of witness. We ask our churches each to examine whether in the BEM event a way has been opened for them to take new steps towards manifesting our oneness in Christ. We look forward to these steps. We wait in anticipation for the new thing they may make possible in our common life.

15. The BEM process, with all its shortcomings, has shown the impact of ecumenical work on the global level. In this lies its unique ecumenical significance, and certainly its significance for the future work of Faith and Order. It is a specific work of limited scope. It is done slowly, with the pain and patience which such labour demands. It urges us to listen to the other's story with compassion, to share the other's experience with empathy, and to bear the other's burden with mercy. In a renewed and sober hope that does not grow weary we look forward to the way ahead, asking that on that way Christ may be glorified by the church's service of God in the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

16. For all this we ask you to join us in giving thanks to God.

Plenary Discussion and Action

Successive drafts of the statement were presented on three occasions in plenary; a total of 34 interventions were made during this process.

The first round of discussion sought a balance between affirming the very positive experience of BEM in the churches ("the text expresses very well the impression which arises from the reception of BEM in the churches"), and avoiding a "triumphalistic" tone which might gloss over issues which continue to challenge our search for unity. The second discussion emphasized the need to link BEM with the continuing work on apostolic faith and the unity of the church and the renewal of human community, as well as with the proposed study on ecclesiology (which seemed to promise "the most direct continuation" of the emphases of BEM); the importance of further study of sacramentality; the importance of stressing the Trinitarian character of BEM; and how, though unreasonable claims should be avoided, BEM had indeed spoken directly to issues "close to the life and faith" of many in the churches.

It was noted that the various sections of the statement ended with thanksgiving; this was a cue to commissioners, who should be responsible for organizing "occasions for churches in various places to share in thanksgiving for the BEM process".

When the final revision of the statement was brought to the plenary by Duncan Forrester, it was said to reflect the Commission's feeling "very well". The plenary moderator then put the motion:

That the Plenary Commission adopt "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry: the Continuing Call to Unity".

The motion was approved unanimously and without abstentions.

Faith and Order:
Past and Present

The Way Ahead: a View of Faith and Order in the World of Today

PATRICK RODGER

I

Aller Anfang ist schwer: my German is scanty — though much better than my Hungarian — so let me open with a few words of it. The task assigned to me, at the beginning of your meeting, is to attempt a general review of the ecumenical movement today and of the place of Faith and Order within it. Now it is twenty-three years since I left the offices of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, so that I am a kind of ancestor, or perhaps *revenant*, in the Faith and Order circles of today. I have spent those twenty-three years in ministry in my own country, though also with a good many visits to continental Europe, both East and West — but never further than Europe; so I am reminded of the days in the Geneva office when it seemed almost impossible to write a single letter which would be appropriate to the local and ecumenical situations of fellow Christians all over the world (one ended up, therefore, writing it in a disembodied language which I called “Genevese”, a form of English which did not really exist anywhere else). Moreover, the preoccupations of a bishop often seem distant from those of a professional ecumenist or, indeed, those of an academic theologian; for a bishop is what in medical terms is called “a general practitioner”; within a single day he may move from liturgy to finance, from parliamentary debate to the building of a parish church, from church and society to faith and order, and back again. It is a way of life which is of passionate interest, or so I found it, but it runs the risk of producing a certain superficiality of mind. Perhaps its chief advantage is that it enables one to see that Christian faith and life form an indivisible whole, and that the questions and concerns of one area of that life turn out to be inextricably linked with those of many others.

Thus I have been encouraged to see that the studies of Faith and Order have steadily broadened since the Montreal conference of 1963, and that

that which was once thought to be specifically concerned with obstacles to church unity has now come to comprehend baptism, eucharist and ministry, confessing one faith, and the unity of the church and the renewal of human community — one cannot get much broader than that! This broadening process has kept pace with the global expansion of the work of Faith and Order and of its theological concerns, and it has also reaffirmed the place of this Commission not as an isolated entity but as one vital element in the whole operation of the WCC. In this role I have always firmly believed and still do — but the difficulty inherent in this broadening process is always to find a proper focus for the work in which we are engaged together. I may add that it is also necessary not simply to follow the latest fashions in ecclesiastical circles, but sometimes to maintain truths which seem unfashionable and even unpopular. For it may well be (and one can say this with great seriousness when meeting in Budapest) that within twenty or thirty years such perseverance will receive its proper recognition. *Magna est veritas et praevalabit* — great is the truth, and it will prevail.

II

What, then, do we seem to have achieved in the past twenty years or so? First, I should claim that through the work of Faith and Order, and also of many bilateral conversations, we have shown quite clearly the falsity of the old accusation that it is the theologians, and they alone, who keep the churches in a state of division. We are all familiar with this argument: simple Christians (lay people in particular) could unite tomorrow, were it not for the sophistication and quarrelsomeness of theologians and their *amour propre* for their own formulations. Certainly one should always be prepared to listen to the criticism of others, but (since I am not myself a professional theologian) I can say that this charge no longer holds in 1989. It has become evident in many parts of the world that other factors, of the kind that used to be described as “non-theological”, are much stronger in keeping churches apart than those of theology proper, factors such as law, finance, property, and clerical privilege — the institutional aspects of the church — to which we may add nationalism and the sheer conservatism of custom. These factors have proved to be much more powerful and tenacious than many older ecumenists expected, and we might be accused of having shown a

degree of naivete in the face of human sinfulness and unreason which are present in ecclesiastical circles as elsewhere. Bishop Oliver Tomkins, my father-in-God in the ecumenical movement, once said that the function of Faith and Order was, so to speak, to produce ready-made suits of theological clothing for the churches to put on when the time came for them to advance into unity. It may now be said that in the Lima document known as BEM, Faith and Order has produced such a suit — patiently designed and woven over many years, even if not entirely finished; but we have seen that when responses from the churches are called for — when orders for the clothing are invited — they often take a long time to come in and are then hedged round with cautious words and reservations, lest the churches should think themselves committed to immediate action.

To illustrate my point with another example: we are all aware that for many years now — perhaps as long as a century — theological teaching in our universities and colleges has been both international and interconfessional. We read one another's books, for the most part without restriction, and absorb wisdom and Christian conviction from whatever source they arise. Yet when it comes to seminary training and the actual exercise of ordained ministry, we continue, in the great majority of our countries and churches, along the old confessional or denominational lines. And the consequence is that there is often a wide gap (I should say, an ever-increasing gap) between the relations of churches and Christians to one another *de jure* and those *de facto*, between the textbook theories and the living realities. For those others who are still officially classed as schismatic or heretical, or at least invalid or irregular, have already in some measure been recognized for practical purposes, and even understood, as brothers and sisters in Christ. Such a tension is very familiar to us in the ecumenical movement, and where it produces a dynamic for us to advance further into unity, we may even welcome it; but if it is allowed to become a kind of static "double-thinking" it is bound to appear both to many Christians (and especially younger ones) and to the world at large as hypocritical. For then the churches are liable to the accusation brought against those who teach one thing and practise another. At such a time it cannot be enough for ecumenical theologians to be complacent and to say "well, we have done what we could". They must continue to exercise all the influence and pressure at their command and to challenge their churches with the question: "Why do you not follow the light that has already been given to you?"

III

I have spoken of something positive in the ecumenical scene, but now I must register a disappointment. Most of the plans of church union which seemed hopeful twenty years ago have made little progress. This is true at any rate of the churches in the English-speaking countries, and, I think, more widely. The reasons for this lack of progress are important for Faith and Order; I offer three, but members of the Commission will no doubt be able to add to them.

1. The first is the failure of churches and their official representatives to move towards greater structural unity. However, this has been offset by another development which, by contrast, is highly encouraging. I refer to the growth of local ecumenism, whereby parishes and neighbourhood churches have been entering into closer relations with each other than ever before, and rank-and-file members have decided that greater unity, in prayer and in action, is something that concerns them and not simply the pioneers or professionals of the ecumenical movement. (In this growth we should not fail to mention the part played by television and radio which — sometimes at least — have had an educational and beneficial role.) For such a development we may indeed thank God, and remembering the emphasis of the New Delhi statement on “all in each place”, we may recognize that thirty years is quite a normal period for such ideas to percolate from ecumenical assemblies to the level of local churches. And since those who are wise have always known that no unity is likely to be achieved until it is ardently desired by the ordinary congregations of the churches, we may regard much that has happened in this recent period of history as a movement of the Holy Spirit.

There is, however, a less happy aspect of this emphasis upon local ecumenism, and that is a certain indifference towards, or even reaction against, the endeavours of the churches themselves in official conversations or negotiations. Instead, there has been a marked tendency for local initiatives to proceed rather as if the church existed nowhere else, so that St Paul’s words “but let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:40) have been turned on their head, and many things have been done indecently and out of order. I do not make this reproach simply on grounds of administrative tidiness (which bishops are supposed to love) but because of the lack often displayed by such initiatives of any proper ecclesiology. And this I connect with a sense of the general decline of authority within the churches — not simply the authority of hierarchies, but also of creeds and doctrines — and the substitution in place of such

authority of the exercise of private judgment, i.e., sometimes the judgment of individuals and sometimes that of small groups. Once more there is both gain and loss in this development: on the one hand, a greater sense of personal responsibility and a greater desire for authenticity in religion on the part of Christian people — but on the other, a weakened sense of the whole body of Christ and a tendency towards the fragmentation of the church.

2. My second reason follows closely on the first, and that is a certain distaste for theology as such among a good many church people. Indeed, there is a sad irony in the fact that just when Faith and Order, after the travail of many years, brings forth the BEM document as a sign of a degree of theological consensus wonderfully achieved, the people of the churches (and some of their leaders as well) show a marked lack of interest in such a consensus. This has been noticeable for some time now. For example, in the Church of England in the 1970s the healing of long-standing divisions with the main English Free churches failed to take place, for the most part not because of powerful theological objections but rather because of a lack of enthusiastic conviction about the whole enterprise. And this same Church of England, having subsequently adopted a more liberal policy of eucharistic hospitality towards other churches, then seemed to feel that it had done enough. The scandal of churches continuing to be “out of communion” with one another, which had once provided such a powerful motive for its participation in the ecumenical movement, now seemed to matter a good deal less to many of its members.

Not only in England but across the world, the nature of modern life, and especially its mobility and the uprooting of persons and their families, has much to do with the weakening of confessional and denominational ties — so that many no longer have any clear sense of why they are Roman Catholic or Lutheran, Anglican or Reformed, and no understanding of these various traditions. Again, this is not all loss. If the result is a new development of a *communis sensus fidelium* among all Christians, one of the original objectives of Faith and Order could be said to be achieved. Yet the quick severance of roots, and such ignorance of traditions, is dangerous in ecclesiastical as in political life. For it exposes people to every kind of passing fashion of thought, including those of racism or nationalism, as if each one were an important truth of our religion. We remember the contrast drawn in Ephesians 4 between those who are “tossed about by every wind of doctrine” and those who, being “rooted and grounded in love”, are able to grow up in all things into Christ who is their Head.

3. My third reason is one which may be peculiar to the Western nations and their contemporary culture, but it is one which I feel to be so powerful that it must be mentioned. I should call it a weakened apprehension of the place of the cross in Christian faith and life; and this issues in a lack of understanding of the realities of sin, repentance, and forgiveness, and also in an aversion to the idea of judgment, both divine and human. It is of the nature of a materialistic and hedonistic society, occupied with consumerism, to avoid these categories of Christianity which were once thought central to it. It is significant that in secularized societies, where religion is defended at all, it is usually on the grounds of the comfort which it can bring (a way of thinking which makes it extremely difficult to understand, or come to terms with, "hard" religions such as Muslim fundamentalism). And although such a Christianity may at first appear gentler and kinder — a welcome relief from the intolerance and harshness of the past — it soon shows itself incapable of dealing with the deeper wounds and divisions of human life. If we cannot recognize our own need of forgiveness and the duty to forgive others, which are so central to the gospel, it is unlikely that we shall be able to speak the truth in love (as opposed to the half-truth in politeness) with one another. To sum up rather bluntly: the atoning death of Christ may still be in our textbooks and our sermons, but it is not strongly present to the consciousness of many modern Christians, clergy and laity alike. And one of the consequences of this deficiency is a lack of power to grapple with the causes of continuing division between us. In a pluralist society, all religions may be equally true or equally false. There is, then, no perception of a divine imperative to examine them too closely, and to that extent there is a pressure upon Faith and Order to reduce its original calling to one of polite diplomacy. My prayer is that this pressure will be strongly resisted.

IV

I come now to the second part of my address, and I should like to put this under the headline of two words, ideology and identity, and to speak of these two in turn.

A historian looking back on the twentieth century, and on the part of the Christian churches within it, would surely observe one very prominent feature: namely the relations of the churches with the civil power; or, to put it more sharply, the struggle with Caesar. Of course, this is no new experience for the church. It began in the ministry of Jesus himself and

has continued ever since with various degrees of intensity. During the present century there have been comparatively few countries in the world where the churches have been favoured allies of civil governments — far more in which they have been regarded with suspicion or contempt or open hostility, and in which they have been subjected to pressures which were sometimes severe. And that which has particularly characterized the age in which we live has been the conflict of many different ideologies, not only with one another but with the Christian faith. Sometimes this conflict has been open and brutal, issuing in actual persecution; but at other times it has been of a more subtle and insidious kind, in which there has been an attempt to assimilate Christianity to the prevailing ideology and to claim it as an acquiescent supporter in a battle being waged on the political front for human minds and hearts.

According to my dictionary, ideology is defined as the “manner of thinking characteristic of a class or individual, ideas at the basis of some economic or political theory or system”. We may add two things: first, that an ideology is usually based upon the teachings of some human leader or philosopher who, for a time at least, is extravagantly revered; and, secondly, that it generally contains some abstract classification of human beings, whereby those who accept the ideology are supposed to be endowed with virtues of all kinds, whereas those who do not accept it are treated as correspondingly vicious, as enemies who are to be undermined and if possible destroyed. Now it is clear to all of us here that by this definition the Christian gospel is not an ideology. It does not rest upon some doctrine of human origin, but on the saving acts of God; it does not affirm that salvation depends upon the acceptance of any system of ideas, but upon the way of Jesus Christ pursued in faith, hope and love; and it does not classify human beings into friends and enemies, but affirms with St Paul that “in making all humankind prisoners to disobedience, God’s purpose was to show mercy to all” (Rom. 11:32). The practical consequence of such a gospel is that there is a criticism of human conduct which extends to all ideologies and forbids Christians to be subservient to any — but also a constant self-criticism, leading to repentance, forgiveness and amendment of life. For we know that it is not against flesh and blood that we wrestle but against those invisible powers of darkness who may attack ourselves and our institutions as much as those of any other people.

All this, I say, we know from our first instruction in the faith; and I dare to assert that the ecumenical movement itself is a demonstration of the gospel, both in its universality and in its uncovering of human

weakness and need under the judgment and mercy of God. Yet we should be very foolish if we were not aware of the constant danger of the ideologizing of Christianity (indeed, the very abstract character of that unbiblical word "Christianity" begins to bear witness to this danger). For the history of the church is littered with examples of times and places where the church has been under severe pressure to conform to the categories of this world, including the ideology of some particular Caesar, and has to some extent yielded to that pressure. At such times salvation has been thought to depend not upon the judgment and mercy of God, to whom alone all hearts are open, but upon the acceptance of some particular orthodoxy, be it a confessional formulation, a political system, or a racial or national culture. And those who lay outside that orthodoxy were seen too often as the enemies of the saved, and as people generally outside the scope of God's saving plan. Hence came many of the caricatures of those of other faiths, other confessions, other races, with which many Christians have lived for centuries and which have served as excuses for exclusion, contempt, and sometimes oppression and persecution.

If the Holy Spirit has brought us to a better mind in some of these matters today, we should include among his instruments the study and experience of theologians in Faith and Order and other occasions of ecumenical encounter. The broadening of our understanding and our sympathy should above all have taught us humility and a reluctance to make hasty judgments or to fall back on unexamined dogmatism. The world is at once a much larger and a much smaller place than our forbears imagined, and it is in our world, not theirs, that the eternal gospel is now to be interpreted and practised. But the temptation of ideologizing is never removed from us and one of my greatest fears for the ecumenical movement has been lest it, too, should degenerate into an ideology — something within which only certain political, economic and social stances are taken as being *de rigueur*, even certain theological and religious temperaments treated as being almost compulsory. I speak like a Western liberal, but am well aware that liberalism is as capable of becoming an ideology, and a snare for the unwary, as any other "-ism". The witness of Karl Barth against the pretensions of all human systems, political or religious, still needs to speak to us after his death.

Now I realize that certain questions may arise after what I have said. Without some ideologizing, it may be objected, what becomes of our duty of evangelism? Is militancy to disappear altogether from the witness of the church? How are we to identify and condemn the many forms of

error? How are we to maintain any clarity or boldness in our theology? To such questions I would make only one reply: that according to the gospel Jesus Christ is at one and the same time the Lord who is truth and the Lord who is unity — and it is this above all which distinguishes the gospel from human ideologies. For it is frequently said, even by church people, that truth and unity are always and inevitably in conflict with one another; and such a conviction is the very basis of ideology. To us, however, it is not so, nor must we ever yield to such an argument. For grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, God's word and God's love incarnate, and we have known him as the source of that fellowship which mysteriously overcomes human barriers and antinomies. Thus in the face of warring ideologies (and indeed of our own internal disputes and disagreements) we can only echo the words of Jesus: "With men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Mark 10:27).

V

My last section concerns the question of identity, and it is linked with that of ideology in the following way. The twentieth-century weakness for ideology is due not only to an abstract way of thinking about human nature, which is alien to the gospel; it results also from a strong desire to affirm particular identities. And this in turn is due to a number of factors: to the great increase in the world's population, to the invention and increasing dominance of machines, to the development of huge political and industrial organizations — in a word, to the anonymous character of much human life today, in which people feel lost and without that clear identity which their ancestors possessed. In such a situation there is a powerful — and altogether natural — urge for individuals and groups to re-affirm their distinctiveness, perhaps in racial or national or ecclesiastical terms. I think I am not mistaken in observing that "consensus theology", of the kind most common in Faith and Order circles, is less fashionable than it used to be in the 1950s and 1960s. For it is feared by many that consensus can only lead to a disappearance of identities which are precious to us; these are in danger of being swallowed up in the grey uniformity of some huge bureaucratic machine, of which the world already has too many examples. From this fear come many of the centrifugal tendencies in Christendom today, and much of the resistance to pleas for closer unity between the churches.

The theologians of the ecumenical movement are compelled, therefore, to take seriously the notion of identity — as they have already had to take seriously the notion of diversity — and to proceed to some evaluation of it within the Christian faith. “Everything is what it is and not another thing.” In the past twenty years or so we have seen powerful protests on the part of black people against being defined in terms of the white, and on the part of women against being defined in terms of the male. The categories imposed by majorities, or sometimes just by powerful minorities, upon the rest of humanity are no longer accepted as adequate to describe the richness of God’s creation. And such a process of the liberation of identities (if one may call it so) should be very congenial to Christian faith, which from the beginning has dealt in particularities and has shown itself capable of adaptation to so many cultural styles in all the continents of the world. Yet like every process in a fallen world this one carries also the possibilities of corruption. For the assertion of a particular identity may also be the vehicle of human pride and selfishness, even to the point of idolatry. It may be accompanied by a refusal to look upon the things of others as well as our own, or to pass with Christ through death in order to be reborn. It may provide a stubborn contradiction to his own saying that whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever is ready to lose it will find eternal life.

In my own country there has recently been rather a revival of an ancient and sterile dispute as to whether the Christian gospel is designed for the salvation of the individual, or of the community of which he or she forms a part. Such an antithesis, we know, is quite false to the New Testament itself and was transcended long ago by its teaching about the body of Christ, in which each member has its own specific character and also its vital contribution to the life of the whole. The same Lord who called his disciples one by one and assuredly knew them as individuals, formed them into a company indissoluble with himself, teaching them to live for one another and for all humankind. Now in the ecumenical movement of this century we have been rediscovering many of the riches of Christ’s body across the world and experiencing the length and breadth, the height and depth, of life within it. So it is natural that corporate and communal values have played a great part in our theology. Yet if in emphasizing these we have neglected the importance of personal vocation, personal devotion, personal destiny, we should be in danger of distorting the wholeness of the gospel. We are no more in bondage to modern secular collectivism than we are to modern secular individualism. That we have the tools necessary for relating the identities of persons, groups and

nations to the koinonia of the church, which is the first fruits of the kingdom of God, I do not doubt; and the articulation of this relation in theological terms seems to me a task of primary importance for Faith and Order in the coming years.

VI

In this address I have sounded a number of notes of warning about our present situation, and I hope these will not be underestimated. I remember how, long ago, Prof. Leo Zander of the Russian Orthodox Church said to me that Faith and Order sometimes seemed to him like a small wheel going round very fast by itself. When that wheel engages (as in a clock) with other wheels of church life, it is bound to be slowed down, and yet only then is it performing its proper function. My last word, however, must not be spoken in any spirit of pessimism but rather of hope and thanksgiving. Seen in the long perspective of two thousand years, the present century, in spite of many sufferings, has been a wonderful one for Christians and we may well thank God for having been allowed to live at this particular time and to have experienced its joys and opportunities — even its perplexities. The prayers of many faithful people who went before us for the peace and unity of the church have begun to be answered, and those who hailed the promises from afar, as the Epistle to the Hebrews says, have not been made perfect without us. And even within the most recent period of twenty to thirty years we have seen how God often answers these prayers in unexpected ways, for what have seemed like frustrations and disappointments have turned out to present new opportunities and to teach us a deeper wisdom. As some doors seem to close, others are constantly opening, and it takes much vigilance and alertness to see where the Holy Spirit is beckoning us to turn our attention. It is because we know that he will never leave us or forsake us, that at this meeting of the Commission we may once again thank God and take heart.

The Changing Shape of the Church Unity Question

JOHN DESCHNER

There is no question that church unity has been the focal issue in the modern ecumenical movement. But there is growing ambivalence about that today. Many insist that the ecumenical movement must turn to other issues if it is to have a future. On the other hand, many also cheer BEM as a recovery of focus after a time of neglect.

I am convinced that it is the church unity question itself which is changing shape, and that our present debate about the ecumenical future is a sign of healthy and necessary ferment in a movement which has an important twentyfirst-century task.

I want to discuss briefly three aspects of that changing shape as they bear upon the Faith and Order mandate "to proclaim the oneness of the church of Jesus Christ". One has to do with signs of a resurgent multilateralism especially among the North Atlantic churches; another with an insistent contextualism among third-world and other ecclesial majorities; and a third with a concern, especially but not only among Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches, with authoritative church teaching processes and the ecclesiological significance of the WCC.

The resurgent multilateral discussion and the demand for ecumenical praxis

Lausanne in 1929 posed the church unity question for multilateral conversation among the churches, and in so doing gained new momentum for the general discussion and for several long-standing bilateral negotiations. That multilateral procedure, housed in Faith and Order, dominated the field for a generation, until the Second Vatican Council reclaimed the bilateral procedure and surprised many with the theological fruitfulness of this more concentrated method. Bilateralism has since established itself among the churches as the dominant approach for the "classical" church unity discussion.

There is little disagreement today that the two approaches are complementary and necessary to each other — the bilateral for the depth and precision of the conversation, the multilateral for the comprehensiveness and challenge of the church unity question as a whole.

What is new in the last five years is a widespread resurgence of interest in the multilateral conversation inspired by the BEM project. And that resurgence is expressing itself in various ways.

There has been a characteristic (Western?) insistence that visible church unity requires fresh doctrinal clarification of certain crucial questions which the BEM responses raise for the multilateral agenda: new work is required in Faith and Order itself on scripture and Tradition, sacraments and sacramentality, ecclesiology. Our meeting will have to make important theological decisions about where the multilateral conversation in Faith and Order should turn next.

But the new multilateralism goes further, or rather, it goes further more successfully than ever before. It is no longer simply a conversation among churches hosted by Faith and Order, but increasingly a dialogue in which Faith and Order acts as a kind of initiative-taking questioner, and each church feels addressed and attempts to respond from the “highest appropriate level of authority”. Moreover, the questions and responses do not remain simply on the doctrinal level. As exemplified in the BEM “preface” they show a marked tendency to discuss ecumenical praxis as well as doctrine — a tendency which is emphasized in the WCC Assembly authorizations of the BEM project.

Nairobi, for example, originally authorized BEM as part of a more general recommendation that member churches should be invited to make “a fresh review of [their] ecumenical commitments”.¹ BEM was obviously intended to remind them how profoundly that commitment is to be rooted in the apostolic faith. But Nairobi’s explicit questions about the BEM project have to do primarily with praxis. How far does each church’s commitment “actually contribute to a resolute quest for unity”? How far do churches see present ecumenical structures “as a means towards unity or as a substitute for unity”? How far do the various levels of each church’s commitment “support, influence, and encourage one another”? Above all, how far do commitments become decisions and actions, not simply documents? Those were Nairobi’s questions about the BEM project.

BEM is not simply a text. It is above all a question to the churches about their teaching and their praxis. For some it asks about new mutual recognitions and reconciliations. For others it enlivens union negotia-

tions, covenanting agreements, interchurch "processes". Virtually every church is engaged in bilateral conversations, and the BEM question asks about coherence between bilateral and multilateral aspects of their ecumenical commitment. Of special importance is the proliferation of local initiatives, many stimulated by BEM, and the opportunity to assess what is being learned from them.

The questions could go on, but I want to focus on a single simple point. BEM's kind of multilateralism does indeed ask us to discuss fresh doctrinal issues, but even more to ask the church unity question afresh of each church as a question of praxis. Faith and Order must learn to ask Fr Congar's question yet again: Do we really want unity? At Lima we found a way to ask that church unity question afresh, and the churches responded. Could we here at Budapest think of a way to give to the churches a new occasion to ask themselves about the implications of their BEM responses for their own ecumenical policies as their considered contribution to visible church unity today?

Why shouldn't this question become the main thrust of a fifth world conference on Faith and Order? And why shouldn't Budapest take the initiative to formulate some of the preparatory questions which such an event would imply?

The changing shape of the multilateral church unity conversation asks questions of the churches, questions which emphasize praxis as well as doctrine.

New majorities and the WCCs call for "a vital and coherent ecumenical theology"

Two gifts have determined the history of Faith and Order. One was the early ecumenical movement's decision to give itself officially to the churches. The other was the churches' decision in 1948 to give Faith and Order to the new WCC, with a standing mandate to remind the Council of the quest for visible church unity that the world might believe. The Council was to have other purposes as well and an open agenda, but the church unity quest was to remain the first, the central, the constitutional purpose at the heart of everything it would do. And this twofold gift determines the polarity within which Faith and Order works today. We have a specific mandate from the churches, and we exercise that mandate within a remarkably wide-hearted WCC. That is the primary reason for the curious by-law status of this Commission: fully part of the constitution of the WCC yet under by-laws which cannot be changed without the approval of Faith and Order's Standing Commission.

This committed yet open agenda has proved to be providential for the creativity of the ecumenical movement. I can best indicate what I mean by referring to the impact since about 1960 of three new majorities upon the WCC's, and especially upon Faith and Order's, life and thought: first, the third-world majority representing more than half the Christians in the world today; second, the Orthodox and Roman Catholic majority representing something like two-thirds of all Christians; and third, the ancient Christian majority of women, whose new-found voice insistently asks for fresh thought and praxis.

This WCC, in its many-faceted totality, is an important context for Faith and Order's special work. Among other things it confronts Faith and Order with the contemporary situation, especially among those new majorities within which the church unity question arises afresh today.

Let me focus that claim by referring to a recent development: the movement within the WCC "towards a vital and coherent ecumenical theology" — a movement full of theological ferment and some very considerable explicit criticism of how Faith and Order does theology. This movement could have some bearing upon re-structuring the Council, and I am sure we shall hear more of it as the Canberra Assembly draws near.

The April 1989 issue of *The Ecumenical Review*² gives a good overview of this concern. The Assembly, Central Committee and Executive Committee are concerned about the theology being done at the Ecumenical Centre. Instead of being vital, it is too often abstract, traditional, official and irrelevant — and Faith and Order is frequently singled out as an offender in this respect. And as for being coherent, the WCC's theology is being heard too much as a broken chorus, with each sub-unit singing its own song.

Listen to the complaint. There is no adequate theological framework, says José Míguez Bonino: theological methodologies are contradictory; above all, the "Ecumenical Centre" seems to have no centre.³ Or again, says Ans van der Bent, our vision of unity has too little understanding of the importance of diversity and even of conflict within the unity of which we speak.⁴ Paulos Mar Gregorios asks for a new "basic document" in the WCC, similar to BEM, rooted in the mind of the church as a community of the Spirit; acquainted with suffering, exploitation and oppression and with the compassion of Christ and a passion for justice, peace and the integrity of creation; and fully aware of the main lines of political-economic, scientific-technological, social-cultural, philosophical-intellectual discoveries in the world outside.⁵ And M.M. Thomas asks simply and hopefully: "Will koinonia emerge as a vital ecumenical theme?"⁶

Our own Unit I staff moderator, Todor Sabev, sums up the concern: "How do we relate the ecclesiological implications of BEM to the 'people's ecclesiology' of CCPD?... How do we bring together the emphasis on participation (Unit III), diaconal self-emptying of the church (Unit II) and the building up of the body of Christ as a sacramental reality? How do we relate 'classical theology' to the new theologies of our day?"⁷

What is Faith and Order's concern in this? Certainly not to be defensive. We have plenty of poor theology to repent of. But we are, most of us, quite as "contemporary" as the next theologian. Our mandate, however, asks us to address the churches and their magisteria — long accustomed to "classical theology" — about the church unity question. And integration of theology at WCC headquarters is not necessarily the most fruitful and direct way to do that.

And yet...! Faith and Order has had for many years not simply a marginal but a leading voice in calling the WCC to clarify the relevance of church unity for the contemporary human community. The unity-renewal document before this meeting is the latest of a series of such texts emphasizing the secular relevance of church unity, catholicity, conciliar fellowship, Christian hope.

So what should be Faith and Order's response to this ferment in the Council? Let me sketch out the two obvious points:

a) Faith and Order should help to lead the quest for a more vital and coherent theological vision in the WCC. This is by no means a matter of the WCC versus Faith and Order — it is a matter of theological obedience for all concerned. It asks for much more than a document. It asks for new ways of working, new breadth of vision, new openness to participation and leadership by representatives of the new majorities in the WCC. It asks for new modes of collaboration with other specialized units in the Council. It asks for much more deliberate attention to how the WCC — and Faith and Order! — lead towards, and possibly sacrifice themselves to, a new, richer, more apostolic form of conciliar life among the churches.

b) The other main point in our response should be, of course, to emphasize that WCC theology should find its vital and coherent theme in the churches' "common calling" to express a "visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship... that the world may believe".

I need not repeat what I have said earlier about the centrality of the church unity question. Let me simply mention two questions which our BEM experience might lead us to ask within the WCC about this new

theological initiative. First, shouldn't any theology "at the centre" of a pre-conciliar WCC take the form of a clear question to, rather more than a consensus answer for, the churches? And second, isn't van der Bent right in his plea for a vitality and coherence which can express not uniformity but the diversity and even controversy that properly belong to church unity, to what Karl Rahner and Heinrich Fries in an important recent book call "a realistic principle of faith"?⁸

The vital and coherent "centre" is in the koinonia of the Trinitarian God, whom we know in Jesus Christ the Head of the one Body, and whose gifts and life we share in the one Spirit. That is what needs to be expressed afresh.

The changing shape of the church unity question, then, is requiring of Faith and Order a principled and constant intercontextual reference to the secular context, and new, better integrated methods of collaboration with other units in the WCC.

Authoritative church teaching processes and the ecclesiological significance of the WCC

The 1960s brought a quite new weight to the Orthodox and Roman Catholic voices in Faith and Order. New themes began to be heard: conciliarity, catholicity, apostolic faith, magisterium. And with the new themes came new questions about the ecclesiological significance of Geneva's "pre-conciliar" entities, especially as they relate to the authoritative teaching and decision-making processes of the churches.

These questions are not simple and are obviously delicate. From the beginning, the churches themselves had built into Faith and Order a rich constitutional paradox: they asked it to promote a rather official inter-church dialogue about magisterial issues of the first importance, whose results were to be such as could be taken seriously by the official teaching authorities of the divided churches. The Commission should do all this without itself having any magisterial authority — and yet do it in such a way as "to call the churches to the goal of visible unity".

It is little wonder that the results have been mixed. Much of the WCC's theological work is commended to the churches for study, and rests undisturbed in their files and libraries. Most of the section reports at Vancouver would be examples of that. Some of the work, on the other hand, seriously engages the theological and even magisterial energies of the member churches. BEM is the familiar example. And yet again, some of the WCC's work is obviously a process of moving from one level of seriousness to the other. Our explication of the creed is an example: a

very preliminary statement, but one which we hope will stimulate and contribute, further down the ecumenical path, to an unprecedented outcome, a common contemporary authoritative confession of the apostolic faith by the churches — an outcome whose magisterial character would transform the ecumenical movement.

And yet something was developing over the years. Increasingly Faith and Order and the WCC were no longer merely a house in which the churches could converse with each other. The Commission and the Council themselves have entered into the multilateral conversation, certainly not as another church or teaching authority in their own right, but also not only as a host, or as a facilitator, or as a summator; but rather as a questioner without magisterial authority. And yet, the remarkable thing about the BEM responses is how positive most are, not simply about the text but precisely about the process of being questioned as churches. In fact, I will dare to say that in the BEM responses the WCC has received a substantial endorsement from the churches for its role as an initiative-taking questioner *in*, and not simply as a locus *for*, the multilateral ecumenical conversation.

What kind of extraordinary questioner is this to which the “highest appropriate levels of authority” have willingly responded?

Let me again be very clear about what I am not asking. Asking this question is no endorsement of an ecumenical enthusiasm or ideology which might consider the WCC to be “the church”, or even an “ecumenical authority”. Asking this question is also not an attempt to promote the claim that the WCC’s constitutional definition as “a fellowship of churches” means that the WCC is the ecclesial koinonia we hope for. Any who might have misunderstood Nikos Nissiotis’s moving moderator’s addresses about the epicletic character of the ecumenical movement should read Bentley G. Hicks’s sobering criticism of the Faith and Order “ideology” in *The Ecumenical Review* of April 1989⁹ and understand better what Nissiotis meant.

The WCC and Faith and Order exercise no ecumenical magisterium among the magisteria. Constitutionally that is utterly clear. If a church declined to respond to BEM because in its view Faith and Order does not have the authority to ask such questions of the church, then that question must be recognized as legitimate on the basis of Faith and Order’s own by-laws, and we must be prepared to give a responsible answer to it.

I personally was helped at the Pyatigorsk consultation on ecclesiology to hear Martin Cressey remind us of the WCC’s Toronto statement (1950).¹⁰ He implied that the reason for taking up ecclesiology is not

simply to perfect Faith and Order documents. There is a more existential reason. The Toronto statement on "The Ecclesiological Significance of the WCC" has never been finished, and after forty years it deserves re-examination. Vitaly Borovoy has also raised the issue of the Toronto statement in the WCC's fortieth anniversary issue of *The Ecumenical Review*.¹¹

Note once again that the Toronto's statement of "what the WCC is not" stands firm as an absolutely necessary clarification of the meaning of membership in the WCC, and hence in Faith and Order, in this "pre-conciliar" situation:

- the WCC is not a super-church;
- it cannot negotiate in any way for the churches;
- it is not based on any one ecclesiology;
- it does not ask any member to treat its own conception of the church as merely relative;
- it requires for membership no specific doctrine of the nature of church unity;
- membership does not imply that each church must regard the other member churches as churches in the true and full sense of the word.¹²

And yet that same statement goes on to indicate eight "positive assumptions underlying the WCC and the ecclesiological implications of membership in it".¹³ Those assumptions are hardly more than sketched in. Is it not opportune to ask what the positive side of the Toronto statement might look like in the light of a process like BEM and its responses? What is the ecclesiological significance, for the WCC's questioner role, of the ecumenical fact that there is a "common recognition among the member churches ...":

- "that Christ is the Divine Head of the Body";
- that they believe that "the church of Christ (is) one";
- that they view membership in the church of Christ as more inclusive than membership in "their own church body" and that these common convictions lead these churches to a quest for "living contact" with those "outside their own ranks";
- that "the relationship of other churches to the holy catholic church which the creeds profess" is "a subject for mutual consideration";
- that member churches "recognize in other churches elements of the true church", and that this partial "mutual recognition" obliges them to enter into a serious conversation with each other in the hope that these elements of truth will lead to the full recognition of the full truth and to unity based on the full truth;

— that the various churches which accept membership in the WCC are thus willing to consult together in learning of the Lord Jesus Christ what witness, what solidarity and mutual assistance he asks of them. For a WCC centred upon the church unity mandate, there is ecclesiological significance here, if not ecumenical authority. There are elements of a basis for Faith and Order's role as initiative-taking questioner in the multilateral conversation. And one of the profoundest obligations of Faith and Order in coming years will be to explore this ecclesiological significance and its contribution to the conciliar fellowship or *koinonia* which we long for.

Some may object to the ecumenical movement "studying itself". To them we simply recall that we are committed as a Commission and Council to an apostolic faith project which ultimately envisions doing what a pre-conciliar WCC cannot do, but only an authentic ecumenical council can do: to offer as churches a common, authoritative confession to our contemporaries of the one apostolic faith attested in the scriptures and the ecumenical creeds. Between Faith and Order's role in the BEM "preface", i.e., asking questions of the churches, and a future truly conciliar confessional event, there somehow lies a large and important task of study, and we had better get on with it. I believe that we could make a start by examining the positive meaning of the Toronto statement, and that such a task belongs to any future ecclesiological study in Faith and Order.

Whatever we mean by the changing shape of the church unity question, the role of the WCC as initiative-taking questioner in the multilateral conversation will be part of it. If a future genuinely universal council confessing the apostolic faith would be indeed a magisterial act, then the preparatory stage, pointing towards that act would, in some sense, participate in its promise.

Towards a conspectus of studies

The principal task of a Plenary Commission is to lay down the general guidelines for the Faith and Order study programme. We will therefore plan to approve a "conspectus of studies" at a later plenary session.

It will be well for us to remember three coming events: (1) the WCC Canberra Assembly in February 1991; (2) the proposal for a fifth WCC conference on Faith and Order, possibly in 1993; and not least (3) the appointment by the WCC Central Committee of the new Faith and Order Standing Commission at Canberra and the new Plenary Commission one year later.

As of now, we see a mountain of work before us: BEM, apostolic faith, unity and renewal, ecclesiology, collaboration on a "vital and coherent ecumenical theology", planning a world conference, and even the ecclesiological significance of the ecumenical movement itself!

The conspectus of studies will have to show us how this, or some part of it, might be possible. May I make some suggestions?

a) I believe we should follow Günther Gassmann's lead and design a new study on ecclesiology. It could deal with the ecclesiological implications of BEM, unity and renewal, and apostolic faith, and could make a beginning on the ecclesiological significance of the WCC (Toronto), the authority question (Bangalore), and the closely-related theme of conciliar fellowship (Nairobi). It could prepare some material for Canberra, but would aim its main report at the world conference.

b) Could the impulse of the unity-renewal study be channelled into an energetic, leading role in the "vital and coherent ecumenical theology" project, emphasizing in it the place of the church unity question in the whole WCC agenda? This should involve planned collaboration with other sub-units, a focus on selected concrete issues (women and men? racism?), and might well result in the preparation of a draft Canberra declaration on the project's theme. This work is also indispensable, of course, in the proposed world conference — and why shouldn't we call it "the fifth WCC conference on Faith and Order"? In my judgment, this project would require the addition of at least one staff member.

c) The analysis of BEM responses will be published in 1990, but Faith and Order's statement about the implications of this project surely deserves to be carefully prepared and presented at Canberra. If this should involve a reappraisal of ecumenical commitments, the world conference would probably be the appropriate place to focus on that.

d) We have long said that the apostolic faith study is aimed for major consideration at the world conference. We now need to assess the use of our explication of the creed, to refine our thinking about what common recognition of the apostolic faith means, and to begin the difficult study of the presuppositions for the confession — the conciliar — phase.

e) There remains the project of a "fifth 'WCC' conference on Faith and Order". Although it has been more than twenty-five years since the fourth, and there is an abundance of work which could be laid before the churches, this should not be simply an assessment of Faith and Order work, but a genuine event in the multilateral dialogue — perhaps precisely an event where the churches could examine together the kind of

ecumenical commitment which will truly advance their visible unity and prepare the way for a common confession of the apostolic faith.

A world conference is not yet, of course, the “genuinely universal conciliar event” which Uppsala proposed twenty years ago. But it could be a necessary preliminary occasion for probing the requirements for such an event — however deeply that might lie in the twenty-first century — as a promised ecumenical event, both extraordinary and authoritative, which would express the life of the churches and their common witness to the apostolic faith for the whole human community. That event is surely on the way.

NOTES

- ¹ David Paton ed., *Breaking Barriers: Nairobi 1975*, London, SPCK, and Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1976, pp.68-69.
- ² *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 41, No. 2, April 1989. Special issue: “Towards a Vital and Coherent Ecumenical Theology”.
- ³ *Ibid.*, pp.160-76.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.201-12.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.184-93.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.177-83.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p.159.
- ⁸ *Unity of the Churches: an Actual Possibility*, Philadelphia, Ramsey, and New York, Paulist, 1985, pp.25 ff.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.266-75.
- ¹⁰ For the text of the “Toronto Statement” see “The Church, the Churches, and the WCC”, in Lukas Vischer ed., *A Documentary History of the Faith and Order Movement 1927-1963*, St Louis, Missouri, Bethany Press, 1963, pp.167-76.
- ¹¹ Vitaly Borovoy, “The Ecclesiastical Significance of the WCC: the Legacy and Promise of Toronto”, in *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 40, Nos 3-4, July-October 1988. Special issue: “Commemorating Amsterdam 1948: 40 Years of the World Council of Churches”, pp.504-18.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, pp.169-71.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, pp.171-76.

Report of the Secretariat: Stavanger 1985 to Budapest 1989

GÜNTHER GASSMANN

Introduction

When the present Commission on Faith and Order, appointed by the WCC Central Committee in 1984, met in Stavanger in August 1985, we were still at the beginning of a new working period. The new programme, consisting of the three major studies (BEM, apostolic faith, unity and renewal) had been prepared by the Commission meeting 1982 in Lima, Peru,¹ and was authorized and supported by the 1983 Vancouver Assembly of the WCC.² The Commission meeting in Stavanger, therefore, had the advantage of enabling the new Commission to be involved at an early stage in the programme and work of Faith and Order and to contribute significantly to its shape and orientation.³ Since then most Commission members have participated in one way or another in the development of the three major studies and the ongoing concerns. Now, at Budapest, four years later, the Commission is again assembled in plenary and we are approaching the end of the mandate of this Commission in early 1991 at the Seventh Assembly of the WCC in Canberra.

This historical frame of less than ten years inevitably calls us to look back and to review what we have achieved, where we have failed and where we are today. And we are aware of the ambivalence which is inherent in such an exercise of "looking back" because of the danger of becoming so much occupied with the past that we do not do justice to the pressing demands of the present and the future. Yet quite apart from looking back at the last years we are in general convinced of the necessity not to lose sight of the new understandings and achievements gained in past Faith and Order studies and to make them fruitful for our present work. Also our working method, which proceeds from first outlines and plans through many steps of developing a theme both in terms of method and content, requires that we look back, improve on what has been done before and give an account of a study process which has usually taken a

number of years. Such awareness of history, continuity, process and development is required even more today because often clarifications and insights gained in earlier Faith and Order and other ecumenical work are forgotten. I can point only to two recent examples of this lack of "ecumenical memory", which is increasingly complained about — and at the same time manifested — in WCC circles and meetings. One instance was the confusion and difficulty created by the terminology of "council" and "conciliar process" in connection with the process on "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation". The other was the observation that obviously many responses to the BEM document had not taken account of the important clarifications on scripture, Tradition and traditions, achieved at the 1963 Montreal world conference on Faith and Order.⁴ It is, therefore, necessary that we in Faith and Order "look back", even if it is only over the last four years.

Yes, we are aware of the ambivalence of such "looking back", and some like to critically picture Faith and Order in general as a "looking back enterprise". Such an impression can, perhaps, easily arise because we deal with controversies and differences inherited from past centuries and we emphasize positively the "faith of the church through the ages". And the critique would be justified if this "looking back" were a theoretical fascination with the past, but irrelevant for present-day Christianity.

We don't think that this is true; rather we believe that the present and the future can only be mastered if we struggle to overcome burdening and imprisoning heritages of the past — this applies equally for example to the creation of a new world economic order and to the manifestation of a reconciled communion among still divided churches which we call visible unity. We look back in order to open ways into the future. We are actually and primarily "looking to the future" when we seek to implement the mandate of Faith and Order, which is an emphatically future-oriented mandate: "to proclaim the oneness of the church of Jesus Christ and to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and in common life in Christ, in order that the world may believe".⁵

These dynamics of past, present and future history undergird the method, work and achievements of Faith and Order. These dynamics have their deepest roots in our faith commitment to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who comes into our midst in Jesus Christ, who is present with us in the power of the Holy Spirit and who is before us in every minute and year of our lives. The period under review in this report is no exception to this dynamic of history and we are aware of the small part we

play in it. Thus we will look back in order to render our service to the churches today and we will, at this meeting in Budapest, consider ways in which we can continue as a reconciling and renewing force within the ecumenical movement of the future.

The three major studies

There has been a mounting criticism of the great number of programmes and projects within the WCC, many of them with only a short life-span and without recognizable results and impact. With its three major and longer-term studies since 1982-1983, the Faith and Order Commission has not fallen into this inflationary temptation. And yet, even with only three studies we have clearly reached the limit of what can be responsibly realized with our restricted personnel and financial resources. Such limits are equally obvious when it comes to the need to communicate this work to the churches and to stimulate them to participate actively in it. Concretely, it makes it difficult for churches to engage in a broad and intensive BEM process (which should be continued and in many cases is continuing), and then to be asked to consider a substantial study document on apostolic faith, and then again, soon after this meeting, to receive the study document on unity and renewal for study and comment. And all this surrounded by a flow of ecumenical documents coming from bilateral dialogues and manifold other ecumenical activities. That many of these ecumenical products find little attention in the churches should be no surprise. That the work of Faith and Order, nevertheless, meets with much interest and expectation in the churches is a reason for gratitude. However this should not distract us from the need to concentrate and focus our programme in the coming years. Such concentration should be one of our contributions to a clearer profile of the task and activity of the WCC, that "most privileged instrument" of the ecumenical movement.

We have regularly informed you about the progress of the three major Faith and Order studies. Many of you have participated in them and the preliminary results of four — or more correctly, eight — years' work are before you. It might, therefore, be sufficient to retrace here only some of the major steps in the development of these studies.

1. "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry"

So much has been said and written about the *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* document⁶ that it would seem that nothing new could be added. The whole BEM process, the interest it has created and the impact it has made, together with the more than 180 official responses of the churches,

have not only marked the period of Faith and Order work under review, but stands out as an unprecedented event in ecumenical history. As never before (and perhaps never again) the results of Faith and Order work have been taken up by churches and ecumenical groups and bodies at all levels of their life. Despite different degrees of acceptance BEM has become a document of the churches and of their common future. The Commission and the secretariat have supported this process. Commissioners and staff have spoken on innumerable occasions interpreting BEM and the reactions to it. In my five and a half years in the secretariat I have probably written more than 500 letters in connection with BEM. The last one so far was to send material and advice to an Indian pastor who is writing a thesis on the concept of sacrament/sacramentality in BEM. We have published the responses in the six-volume series *Churches Respond to BEM*,⁷ and a few additional responses will be published in a supplementary volume.

Our main task during the last two years was to prepare the draft report on the BEM process and responses.⁸ Given the approximately 1,500 pages of responses with their wealth of material, this task proved to be extremely difficult both in terms of method and content. With its hectic daily working atmosphere the secretariat had to rely on the help of commissioners and advisers who wrote first evaluations. Three consultations (Venice 1986, Annecy 1987 and Turku 1988) enabled a larger group of people to co-operate in identifying issues for elucidation and to clarify major issues for further work. A smaller drafting team met four times in 1988 and 1989 and prepared the greater part of the report. The Standing Commission, which sent a letter of appreciation to the churches in 1987, and especially its BEM steering group guided this process of preparing the report. The draft before you could easily have grown to 500 pages, but we have tried to keep it as short as possible in order that it may find wider circulation and attention. We are fully aware of its limitations and, within the given limits of space, we can certainly improve it before it is published in 1990. More detailed studies by theologians, some of which have already appeared, will complement this report.

This report signifies not the end of the BEM process, which continues in many places. Nor is it the final word of Faith and Order on baptism, eucharist and ministry. The responses of the churches clearly point to specific issues which require further work. This has to be integrated into our programme for the next years, especially in the area of ecclesiology. But as the responses affirm, BEM has been a major ecumenical achievement and the discussion on BEM has been a renewing experience for the churches. The responses not only express gratitude to Faith and Order,

but also explicitly mandate us to continue this serious theological dialogue. BEM should continue as an instrument of renewal and reconciliation of the churches, so that they may become more credible and effective signs of God's purpose of reconciliation and salvation for all humanity.

2. "Towards the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today"

Faith and Order has always been concerned with the "apostolic faith", that is, in the words of the world conference 1963 in Montreal, with "the Tradition of the gospel testified in scripture, transmitted in and by the church through the power of the Holy Spirit"⁹ — and this transmission of the gospel always includes its new interpretation and application. It was, however, a new step after Lima 1982 when we began to consider the fullness of the apostolic faith, guided by the affirmations of the Creed of Nicea Constantinople of 381 and on the basis of the biblical witness. Out of the three elements of the study "Towards the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today" which were identified at Lima — common explication, recognition and confession of the apostolic faith — the first element, explication, was chosen in 1984 as an entry point. Three consultations in 1984 and 1985 helped to prepare a first draft which was discussed by the Commission in Stavanger in 1985. The suggestions from Stavanger were incorporated into the draft. The Standing Commission and especially its apostolic faith steering group further developed the text which was then received by the Standing Commission in 1987 for publication as a draft study document under the title *Confessing One Faith*.¹⁰

Since 1987 this text has found considerable interest and we had to reprint the English, French and German editions. We have received a considerable number of comments from theological and ecumenical commissions, theological faculties and individuals. During that same time Faith and Order organized four international consultations. Their purpose was to do a critical re-reading of the main parts of *Confessing One Faith* and to address issues which are related to these parts. Thus the consultation on the first article (Porto Alegre, Brazil, 1987) also contributed reflections on the Christian responsibility for creation to the "Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation" process. The consultation on the second article (Rhodes, Greece, 1988) added reflections on the significance of the Christological confession for contemporary intellectual and social concepts and challenges. The consultation on the section on the church in the third article (Pyatigorsk, USSR, 1988) also looked at the inter-relation of ecclesiological perspectives in the three major studies. And the last consultation, which dealt with the section on the

Holy Spirit in the third article (Würzburg, FRG, June 1989) used the greater part of its time to reflect on the theme and sub-themes of the forthcoming Assembly of the WCC in Canberra in 1991.

The suggestions for a revision of the study document *Confessing One Faith* coming from outside groups and from these four consultations have been assembled and ordered by the secretariat in a list which is as long as the text itself. There is no doubt that *Confessing One Faith*, the so-far longest text in the history of Faith and Order, represents an important stage in our work. It is equally obvious that this text needs improvement. There is already ample material at hand for this task and the Commission can render significant contributions for a revision. But it is, finally, also apparent that this text will never reach a stage where everybody will fully agree with it because it touches on many theological issues where divergent opinions exist; but many of them are not a barrier to our calling mutually to recognize and jointly to confess the fundamental affirmations of the apostolic faith.

In facing this difficulty the Standing Commission has repeatedly considered the methodology of the whole study project and the purpose of a text like *Confessing One Faith*. Consequently, the apostolic faith steering group suggested in April 1989 (a) to publish a carefully revised version of *Confessing One Faith* in 1990; (b) to state more clearly the purpose of this text in relation to the aims of common recognition and confession in a revised version of the "introduction" to the text, which will be further discussed here in Budapest; and (c) to move on to the task of assisting the churches to enter into a process towards common recognition and confession — and this probably with the help of rather short texts focusing on fundamentals of the apostolic faith.

3. "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community"

The second major study project inaugurated in Lima 1982 was greeted by the WCC Assembly at Vancouver as "of strategic importance for the whole WCC".¹¹ The title and theme "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community" indeed encompasses the two main emphases of the ecumenical movement — except, of course, that they are often seen and treated in isolation from one another. And it is exactly here where the origin of this study lies, namely to demonstrate theologically the way in which these two emphases are organically inter-related.

It was soon realized that this study must be basically an ecclesiological study and the first step was to develop a draft on "The Church as Mystery and Prophetic Sign" at a first consultation in 1985 and to present it to the

Stavanger Commission meeting for discussion and revision. Already before Stavanger, it was decided to inter-relate this ecclesiological focus with two areas of human brokenness in need of renewal. In continuation of the earlier study on the community of women and men this issue was chosen as one of the two areas, while the second one, the churches' involvement in the concern for justice, was chosen after Stavanger from an originally much broader proposal.

Since Stavanger the Standing Commission has regularly discussed and revised the draft text "The Church as Mystery and Prophetic Sign", but the main work was now on the ecclesiological implications of the concerns for the community of women and men and for justice. Three consultations each dealt with the community theme (Prague, Czechoslovakia, 1985; Porto Novo, Benin, 1988; and Cambridge, England, 1989) and with the justice theme (Singapore, 1986; Porto Alegre, Brazil, 1987; and Harlem, New York, USA, 1988). At the same time a study guide *Unity and Renewal*¹² for local groups was prepared. It was published in 1987 and has since been translated into several languages and is being used in groups in several countries.

The most difficult and creative task of this study so far has been to integrate the findings of these consultations and the work on the church as mystery and prophetic sign into a coherent theological framework and a study document — and this is, after all, the main purpose of the study. After preparatory work at the Standing Commission in 1988, the Cambridge consultation in 1989 and drafts from members of the unity-renewal steering group, a final consultation of this group, together with advisers, in March 1989 at Leuenberg, Switzerland, put together the draft of a study document "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community".¹³ This document is now before the Commission here in Budapest and we will have a chance to discuss and to improve it. The text is, I believe, another highly important result of this working period of Faith and Order. When it has been revised and sent to the churches it has the potential to become a major contribution to the churches' search for a more appropriate understanding of the nature of the church and of its unity in relation to its mission and service in the world as sign and instrument of God's saving and renewing purpose in history. I am very happy and grateful that after the Faith and Order study on "The Unity of the Church and the Unity of Mankind" in the seventies, which did not reach an acceptable conclusion, we have now been able to achieve this result which is a good basis for a future study document. But it is up to you to judge.

Ongoing concerns

The three major studies made up only a section of the work of the Faith and Order secretariat during the past years. A second element in the overall programme was the so-called "ongoing concerns". These are tasks which Faith and Order already accepted a long time ago and which take the form of a specific and continuing service to the churches and the ecumenical movement.

1. United-uniting churches and union negotiations

United and uniting churches represent a significant expression of our common search for the visible unity of Christ's church. These churches do not have an organizational structure comparable to other confessional families. There is, however, an obvious need for them to meet from time to time in order to exchange experiences and to reflect together on their contribution to the ecumenical movement. This need is served by regular consultations which are organized by the Faith and Order secretariat. The fifth international consultation took place in July 1987 at Potsdam, GDR, and its report *Living Today Towards Visible Unity*¹⁴ contains important theological insights which are relevant for the whole ecumenical movement and should contribute to the discussion on unity at the forthcoming Canberra Assembly of the WCC. The next consultation will be held in about three or four years. Faith and Order has also continued to render a service of advice and information with regard to union plans and conversations between churches. The biennial *Survey of Church Union Negotiations* was published for the years 1981-83, 1983-86 and 1986-88 in *The Ecumenical Review* and is available as an offprint.¹⁵

2. Week of Prayer and Ecumenical Prayer Cycle

The 80th anniversary of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was commemorated in 1988. The manifold ecumenical efforts need to be undergirded by common prayer for Christian unity which is a constant reminder that this unity, in the final instance, will not be the product of our own good works. And the growing communion between the churches finds its deepest expression in the discipline of praying together and for each other. Within this framework the material for the Week of Prayer has continued to be prepared at annual consultations by the Faith and Order secretariat and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. The observance of this week is still the most widespread ecumenical co-operation between churches and, while this week has become a rather routine affair in some situations, it serves in others as a first impulse for emerging ecumenical relations.

During these years the secretariat has also been involved in the preparation of a completely new edition of the Ecumenical Prayer Cycle. This has been done in co-operation with the Sub-unit on Renewal and Congregational Life, which carried major responsibility during the last phase of preparation. The rather substantial result of this work was published (in two volumes) a few months ago under the title *With All God's People*.¹⁶ We welcome this important publication and should help to make it known, to assist in translations and to encourage its use.

3. Bilateral and multilateral conversations

Faith and Order has been given the task of following the development of bilateral conversations between Christian World Communions and to assist in keeping these conversations in a complementary relationship with our own multilateral dialogue. The bilateral dialogues in which all the worldwide Communions are now involved have become a major expression of the ecumenical movement today and are a challenge to the WCC not to underestimate the importance of the theological struggle to overcome doctrinal and institutional barriers to Christian unity. Within our limited possibilities we have tried to take note of the results of bilateral dialogues and to profit from them for our own studies. This is facilitated by quite a number of Commission members who are involved in such dialogues. Staff members have also participated in some dialogues and we have delegated observers to them. The secretariat organized the Fourth Forum on Bilateral Conversations in 1985,¹⁷ our major contribution to this task. The Forum affirmed the complementary nature of bilateral and multilateral dialogues by studying the inter-relation between BEM and bilateral conversations. The Christian World Communions have asked us to organize the Fifth Forum in 1990 and this Commission meeting will have an opportunity to offer suggestions for its programme.

Communication and co-operation

The work of Faith and Order would be irrelevant and ineffective for the ecumenical movement if it were not carried out as a service to and together with the churches. Even though there are interested people and groups in many churches and councils of churches who follow and communicate the processes and results of our studies, it remains a major responsibility for the secretariat and the Commission to communicate our concerns and the fruits of our work to the churches. The best form of communication is by participation. Thus, many Commission members

have provided for interpretation of the Faith and Order programme and enabled participation in it. For the 26 international consultations and meetings of the Standing Commission and about 10 smaller meetings, which have been organized by the secretariat since 1983, we have invited a considerable number of participants, including younger ones, who do not belong to the Commission. We have also intentionally used these meetings for contacts with local churches and theological and ecumenical institutions. Staff members have visited many churches and ecumenical organizations, given lectures, participated in conferences, and spoken to hundreds of visiting groups in Geneva and Bossey. We carry out an extensive correspondence and our publications are in great demand. We hope that we can use the — hopefully — less hectic period between Budapest and the appointment of a new Commission in 1992 to strengthen and broaden our contacts.

The secretariat is a part of the WCC and not an isolated island within it. Thus, a considerable part of our time has been given to co-operating with other sub-units and to involvement in the activities of the WCC as a whole. I have already referred to the co-operation with Renewal and Congregational Life in the preparation of the Ecumenical Prayer Cycle. Within the framework of the apostolic faith study and as a contribution to the process on “Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation” (JPIC) we organized in 1986 and 1988 two joint consultations with the Sub-unit on Church and Society — the latter on “Creation and the Kingdom of God”. As a result of the original proposal to hold a joint world conference together with the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, joint reflection with this Commission on unity and mission was initiated. Commission and staff members have been involved in the WCC discussion on “vital and coherent theology”, in the preparation of the JPIC convocation in 1990 and the WCC Assembly in 1991. Several Commission members and the director have prepared two documents on “Hierarchy of Truths” and “The Church — Local and Universal” for the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC. In these and many other ways Faith and Order has served as an integral and respected part of the WCC.

People and finances

Programmes, ongoing concerns, communication and co-operation in Faith and Order, as elsewhere, come to life and become a tangible reality through persons — persons who are committed to our common vision of helping to draw the churches closer to each other and to enabling them to

fulfill their common calling in the world. We in the secretariat would be a desperate little group if there were not a cloud of people who dedicate (and often sacrifice) part of their time to carry special responsibility for our work, to contribute to it in diverse ways and to encourage us through their commitment, counsel and support. For my colleagues in the secretariat and myself the reality of being part of such a supportive community was certainly one of the most positive experiences during these past years. Without this community we would never have been able to cope with the ambitious programme whose results or first-fruits are now before you.

This experience gives us many reasons for gratitude. In the Commission itself the moderator and his vice-moderators deserve special thanks for the engagement and wisdom with which they have not only directed our work but also cared for the well-being of the staff members and for good relations within the staff team. The officers were surrounded and helped by the other members of the Standing Commission who contributed in a special way to our study projects through their work in the three steering groups. But also many members of the Plenary Commission have in diverse ways contributed to our work: through participation in consultations and by helping to arrange such consultations in their country, through their involvement in local Faith and Order work and their support in spreading and interpreting Faith and Order concerns and results, and in many other ways.

During these years the moderator of the Central Committee, the general secretary of the WCC and the moderator of Programme Unit I have constantly challenged Faith and Order to fulfill its essential role in the life of the WCC. They have been faithful friends and partners in dialogue and supportive colleagues for us in the staff, and also here at Budapest they manifest their interest and commitment by their presence and contribution. We are deeply grateful to them. Such gratitude is also due to the many colleagues in churches, theological seminaries, and ecumenical bodies and institutes who have supported our work through the delegation of persons, financial assistance and involvement in our studies. One example of such relationships are the excellent working contacts with our friends in the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity in Rome, who also helped to arrange for two papal audiences for our officers and staff, in 1983 and 1989.

Among the friends of Faith and Order who have left us too early, we remember in pain and gratitude our former moderator, Prof. Nikos Nissiotis, whose sudden death in 1986 has taken from Faith and Order

and the ecumenical movement one of their most eminent and creative advocates. We also remember in gratitude our Commission member, Rev. Victor San Lone from Burma, who died in 1987, and we commend these two friends to God, the Source and Giver of eternal life.

Between Stavanger and Budapest there has been, fortunately, little change in our staff team. This continuity has helped immensely in coping with the many tasks during this period. The exception was Dr Hans-Georg Link, who returned to his church in Germany in 1987 and was succeeded by Rev. Dr Irmgard Kindt-Siegwalt. Hans-Georg's contribution in getting the apostolic faith study off the ground and his deep ecumenical commitment has been an important contribution to our work. This applies also to our long-term consultant, Frère Max Thurian, who dedicated a considerable part of his active life to the Lima document before he left his service with Faith and Order in 1986 and became a member and priest of the Roman Catholic Church in 1987. We respect his decision and remain his grateful friends.

My and our thanks and appreciation are, of course, especially due to the people who carried out the work in the secretariat during this period. In the order of their time of service with Faith and Order, but also in terms of the often extremely heavy amount of work I should first mention our two administrative assistants, Renate Sbeghen and Eileen Chapman. Without them we would not have reached our goals and their faithful and committed involvement in our work deserve more praise than I can express with these few words.

Dr Gennadios Limouris contributes many gifts and experiences to our team; he effectively represents and interprets for us the concerns of one of the great Christian traditions and he has carried major responsibility for helping to bring the apostolic faith study to its present stage. Dr Thomas Best has very competently and conscientiously fulfilled his responsibility for helping to bring the new study on unity and renewal to the remarkable results which are before you, together with his work for the united-uniting churches and the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. With Dr Irmgard Kindt-Siegwalt new ideas and concerns enriched our conversations and work. She carried co-responsibility for preparing the BEM report with lively interest and assisted in the unity-renewal study and the work for the Week of Prayer. We should finally mention the four "interns", young theologians, who have been with Faith and Order during the last three years for six months or one year each: Beate Maeder-Metcalf, Hinrich Witzel, Rüdiger Noll and, at present, Ursula Gieseke, have helped us in many ways and received a rather intensive introduction to Faith and Order

and the WCC during their time in Geneva. They represent one of our contributions to the ecumenical formation of a new generation which will carry on the work.

As long as we live and work in this world we also, unfortunately, need money. In Stavanger, four years ago, I complained in my report about some developments in WCC financial support for Faith and Order which seemed to increasingly restrict our possibilities. But I must say now that given the limits of staff and accordingly of activity we have received sufficient financial support to implement all our plans. The finance department of the WCC has been very helpful and supportive and we extend our deep gratitude to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the USA and the Evangelical Church of Germany (EKD) for their secondment of two staff members. The EKD through a substantial annual grant has enabled us to finance most of our consultations in the last years, and several churches and agencies have provided additional support in the form of designated contributions or additional grants. We appreciate very much all these tangible signs of interest and support. Having said this, I still hope that one day in the near future a more adequate staffing of the secretariat will be possible.

Concluding remarks

The purpose of this report has been to remind us of efforts, steps and developments leading up to the present stage in our work, and to express gratitude to all who have enabled us to render our contribution to contemporary ecumenical history. This "taking stock" has been presented in a positive and confident manner, and it is indeed my conviction that with its available resources of personnel and finance Faith and Order has achieved as much as has been humanly possible. But we would have liked to have done more. For example, our contacts with churches in the southern hemisphere should be further strengthened. The involvement of more younger and women theologians needs to be expanded. Relations with ecumenically-minded theologians in the evangelical and charismatic movements are still in an initial stage. In a period of increasing ecumenical relations outside the structures of the WCC, developments in bilateral dialogues and contacts with Christian World Communions deserve much more attention.

In terms of content we need more time for concentrated reflections on basic issues concerning the self-understanding of the WCC and the orientation and goal of the ecumenical movement. We are asked to direct more attention to theological issues raised by inter-religious dialogue.

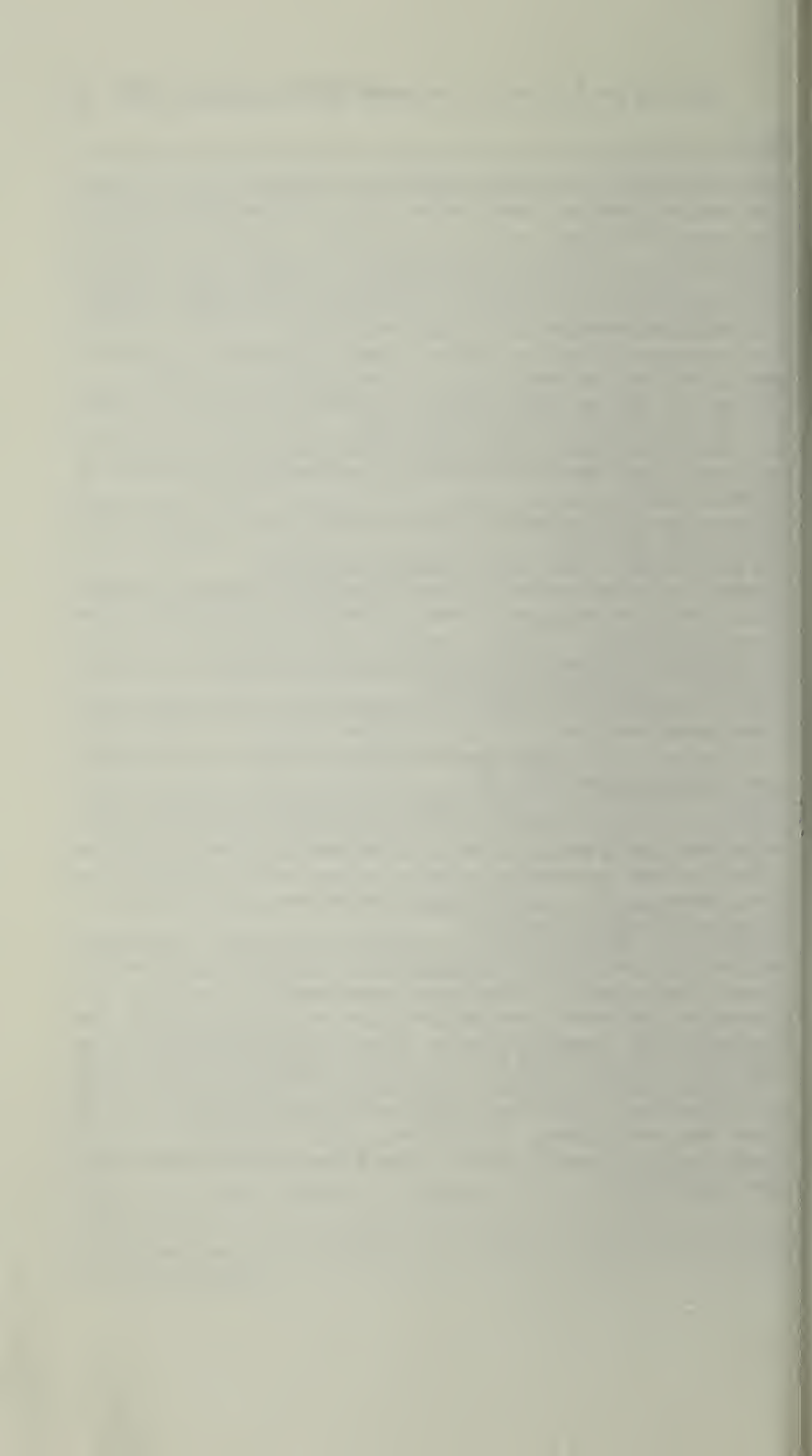
The pressing missionary and evangelistic tasks of ecumenical Christianity in an emerging pluralistic and scientific-technological world civilization present a challenge to the whole orientation of our work. In the present discussion on structure within the WCC, but not only here, there is a plea that the areas of worship and spirituality should be more extensively integrated into the Faith and Order programme. The experience of the BEM process has shown that results of ecumenical studies are taken up on a broad scale when Christians and churches clearly perceive the relevance of such results for their corporate and personal faith and life. From this many conclude that other Faith and Order studies should use this as an example and guide for their own methodology and perspectives.

It would be unrealistic to promise that these and other requests and expectations could be taken up by simply extending future Faith and Order activities. We do not have the means to do so. But there may be other ways. We are challenged within the WCC to reduce programmes, simplify structures and present a clearer focus on goals and priority themes. If we accept this challenge, and our suggestions and discussions during the second half of this meeting in Budapest should move in this direction, we might recover that space which could allow us to respond to some of the needs and requests mentioned above. This hope and commitment would be even more realistic if the WCC and the churches could strengthen the working capacity of Faith and Order.

We live in a period of decreasing ecumenical enthusiasm and unfulfilled ecumenical hopes in many places. In such a period, even more urgently than before, an instrument is needed to keep before the churches their divine calling to move closer towards each other on the way to unity. We live in a period of an increased Christian commitment to the aspirations of humanity for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. This commitment requires an instrument which helps the churches to rediscover and express that communion in faith in which their commitment finds its deepest common roots and credibility. We live in a period when the interdependence of political, social, economic and intellectual developments can only be coped with in a global dimension. We need, therefore, an instrument which can help the churches to understand and together confess God's saving and renewing action in the midst of the complexities of that global theatre of world history. Faith and Order cannot be the only instrument to respond to these massive tasks. But without Faith and Order and its many friends there would be no instrument of this kind at all. Therefore, let us continue. Our service is needed and will be blessed.

NOTES

- ¹ See Michael Kinnamon ed., *Towards Visible Unity: Commission on Faith and Order, Lima 1982*, Vol. I, Faith and Order Paper No. 112; Vol. II, Faith and Order Paper No. 113, Geneva, WCC, 1982.
- ² David Gill ed., *Gathered for Life: Official Report, VI Assembly, World Council of Churches*, Geneva and Grand Rapids, WCC and Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983, pp.43-52.
- ³ See Thomas F. Best ed., *Faith and Renewal: Commission on Faith and Order, Stavanger, 1985*, Faith and Order Paper No. 131, Geneva, WCC, 1986.
- ⁴ P. C. Rodger and L. Vischer eds, *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order: Montreal 1963*, Faith and Order Paper No. 42, London, SCM, 1964, pp. 50-61.
- ⁵ By-Laws of the Faith and Order Commission, 2, in *Faith and Renewal*, *op. cit.*, p.243.
- ⁶ Faith and Order Paper No. 111, Geneva, WCC, 1982.
- ⁷ Max Thurian ed., *Churches Respond to BEM*, Volumes I, Faith and Order Paper No. 129, and II, No. 132, 1986; III, No. 135 and IV, No. 137, 1987; V, No. 143, and VI, No. 144, 1988; Geneva, WCC.
- ⁸ "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry 1982-1989: Report on the Process and Responses", FO/89:10, Geneva, WCC, 1989.
- ⁹ *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order*, *op. cit.*, p.52.
- ¹⁰ *Confessing One Faith: Towards an Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as Expressed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)*, Faith and Order Paper No. 140, Geneva, WCC, 1987.
- ¹¹ See *Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Commission, 1984, Crete*, Faith and Order Paper No. 121, Geneva, WCC, 1984, p.34.
- ¹² *Unity and Renewal: a Study Guide for Local Groups*, Faith and Order Paper No. 136, Geneva, WCC, 1987.
- ¹³ "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community: Draft Study Document", FO/89:6, Geneva, WCC, 1989.
- ¹⁴ Thomas F. Best ed., *Living Today Towards Visible Unity: the Fifth International Consultation of United and Uniting Churches*, Faith and Order Paper No. 142, Geneva, WCC, 1988. German: Thomas F. Best hrsg., *Gemeinsam auf dem Weg zur sichtbaren Einheit: Die fünfte Internationale Konsultation vereinigter und sich vereinigender Kirchen, Potsdam, 1. bis 8. Juli 1987*, Berlin, Veröffentlichung der Kirchenkanzlei der Evangelischen Kirche der Union, 1988.
- ¹⁵ Thomas F. Best, "Survey of Church Union Negotiations 1981-1983", Faith and Order Paper No. 122, Geneva, WCC, 1984 (reprinted from *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 36, October 1984, pp.404-420); [with National Correspondents] "Survey of Church Union Negotiations 1983-1985/86", Faith and Order Paper No. 133, Geneva, WCC, 1986 (reprinted from *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 38, October 1986, pp.456-479); "Survey of Church Union Negotiations 1986-1988", Faith and Order Paper No. 146, Geneva, WCC, 1989 (reprinted from *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 41, No. 2, April 1989, pp.281-302).
- ¹⁶ John Carden compiler, *With All God's People: the New Ecumenical Prayer Cycle*, Vols I and II, Geneva, WCC, 1989.
- ¹⁷ *Fourth Forum on Bilateral Conversations: Report*, Faith and Order Paper No. 125, Geneva, WCC, 1985.



Major Programmes of Faith and Order

Algebra
of

Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry: Report on the Process and the Churches' Responses

THOMAS HOPKO

Seven years have passed since the WCC's Central Committee sent the Faith and Order paper on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* to the churches for their official responses. The Faith and Order Commission completed its work in January 1982 in Lima, where the "convergence statement" was unanimously adopted. Some commissioners at the time were elated with the result. Others were hesitant. A few were bewildered. And at least one was prophetic.

Protopresbyter Vitaly Borovoy of the Russian Orthodox Church proclaimed the completion of the brief ecumenical statement on the three basic areas of Christian faith as a pentecostal event. He saw the Commission's fifty years of disputation and debate, writing and rewriting, reading and responding, criticizing and correcting... as an act of God in his people; an accomplishment — however tentative and imperfect — which truly "seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us".

No one in 1982, whatever his or her appreciation of BEM, foresaw the interest which the statement would evoke in the Christian community, particularly in Europe and North America. No one envisaged the impact which it would have within and among the churches of such diverse historical origins and such varying, and in many ways contradictory, traditions.

The task now before us is to evaluate the process since 1982, to examine the churches' official responses to BEM, and to issue our report. We will speak first to the member churches of the WCC, and particularly to the churches — members and non-members — which have submitted written evaluations of the Lima statement. We will address, in addition, all who are concerned with BEM. And we will also speak to ourselves as we plan the future work of Faith and Order, a task for which the majority of us in this room are currently responsible.

The impact of BEM

The first importance of BEM for the ecumenical movement is in the engagement which the statement evoked on all levels of church life. More than 450,000 copies of the document, with more than 150,000 study guides, have been distributed in more than 30 languages. Thousands of written reactions have been published. These include first of all the 185 formal responses from the churches "at the highest appropriate level of authority". Among these are the one official response from the Roman Catholic Church issued by the Vatican; and one each from the Salvation Army, the Seventh Day Adventists, the Missouri Synod of the Lutheran Church and the Old Catholic Church of Switzerland. Nine responses came from Eastern Orthodox churches, with about the same number coming from Anglicans; three have come from Oriental Orthodox and four from Societies of Friends. All the rest came from various churches of Protestant origin and tradition; the majority of these were from Lutherans (who produced the largest number in this category), as well as Methodists, Reformed and Presbyterian churches, United churches and Baptists. A plethora of personal and corporate evaluations of, and commentaries on, BEM have also been published. More than a thousand papers, essays, statements, studies, reviews and reports are already recorded. Who knows how many are yet to come?

But there is much more to the impact of BEM in the Christian community than the printed results. There is the existential engagement of countless believers with the text, and with reactions to it; the living responses not committed to writing, but imprinted on the thoughts and actions of people, many of whom have never seen the text of BEM, nor examined its paragraphs, nor debated its contents.

The unwritten reactions to BEM, and to the ecclesial and ecumenical decisions and actions directly resulting from it, are inestimable. Church school classes, adult study groups, parochial meetings, diocesan and deanery assemblies, clergy fellowships, ecumenical gatherings on all levels, as well as countless conversations in sacristies, classrooms, offices, social halls and at dinner tables have directly and indirectly dealt with issues presented in the "convergence statement". Decision-making bodies in many churches have formulated liturgical, educational, ethical and ecumenical policies and programmes for implementation in the lives of their people under the document's influence.

Such responses to BEM have happened and will continue to happen because the statement has touched nerves and met needs in the lives of people and churches which could be touched and met in no other way.

Something other than confessional and bilateral approaches were required. A more comprehensive view was demanded by which to assess the churches' convictions and practices on the most fundamental issues. An occasion was needed for a broader questioning of the given and the received in all traditions in terms of basic affirmations about Christian faith and life which provide, however inadequately, for the possibility of going beyond — and behind and beneath — current conditions in all communions.

The reforms and renewals occurring within the various churches were insufficient for this purpose, as were the several bilateral and multilateral consultations and church unions, since these often became themselves occasions for criticism, frustration, questioning and doubt. BEM appeared at this point in time as a providential gift; not the only one, to be sure, but one of special significance because of its broad ecumenical authorship and authority. An unexpected way forward presented itself, a fresh term of reference, a welcome stimulus to self-inspection, a ready tool for discernment and clarification, an unavoidable occasion for taking stock and evaluating convictions and actions both within and between the churches.

A reading of the churches' responses, and other ecclesial and ecumenical documents in recent years — as well as the "signs of the times" — reveals that the BEM process and its results, within their admittedly limited province, have been surprising and paradoxical. All churches display evident influences of BEM in the thought, speech and behaviour of their members, particularly their leaders, theologians and ecumenical workers; and all show signs of changes in their attitudes and actions on the basis of the statement (a fact attested to with gratitude in the written responses). But all reveal as well that confessional controversies are anything but dead. Reactions to BEM clearly show that East and West are still with us, as are Reformation and Counter-Reformation controversies and categories, and disputes between the "free churches" and the not-so-free, and between those who practise "believer's baptism" and those who do not (however they are to be called). And more recent controversies have manifested themselves more sharply under stimulation from the statement, the most evident being those between churches in the third world and those in Europe and North America, and those between supporters of ecumenical activity and those opposed to it (for whatever reasons) in all the churches.

Lines of agreement

Whatever the controversies, however, the context is a new one, and the convergences are real. The lines between the various traditions can no

longer be so firmly and finely drawn. A certain growing together is apparent. A mutual influencing and understanding is happening. The leaven of BEM is working. The black church hymn (which some of us heard at last year's unity and renewal consultation in New York) which begs the Lord to "take us back to the place where we first believed" can no longer be sung — at least not with a particular ecumenical meaning. To go back after BEM — or what has been called the "BEM decade" — is not possible. And for many believers (though surely not for all) it is not desirable.

We find in the churches' responses to BEM common gratitude for the strong Trinitarian character of the Lima statement, and a firm agreement that it is God — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — who enacts and enables baptism, eucharist and ministry in the church. The responses generally insist upon God's initiative in effecting the churches' worship and ministry, including the response and participation of the believers, with all things done in and by the people of God being rooted in God's action through the divine Son and word, and the Holy Spirit. A strong Trinitarian consciousness is characteristic of Christian thought and action, according to most of the churches' responses to BEM.

The churches which responded also see baptism in a Trinitarian perspective, with virtually all agreeing that through the baptismal act the person baptized by God's grace and power is incorporated into Christ's body and anointed by the Holy Spirit — however, and whenever, the rite is performed in the Trinity's name. On this basis virtually all agree that baptism is irrepeatable, that it effects an objective bond between all the baptized and thereby constitutes an objective foundation for ecclesial unity. This leads to the conclusion that all baptized believers are certainly members of Christ's church, though for some, for other reasons, the question about how fully or perfectly still remains.

All also generally agree that the act of baptism in the name of the three divine persons is an ecclesial act involving and effecting the entire church community, for which the entire community is responsible and accountable. This explains the strong affirmation in almost all responses that however and whenever baptism is performed the rite should normally occur in the context of the gathered assembly, and requires catechetical instruction before and after its enactment.

With regard to the eucharist, the churches' responses express gratitude for the Trinitarian dimensions of the eucharistic rite, and reveal general agreement concerning the centrality of eucharistic worship in the church, which always includes the proclamation of God's word together with the

supper as one inseparable action through which Christ is objectively present (however this is explained), and which recalls and remembers (however anamnesis is understood) not only Jesus' last supper with his disciples, but the whole of God's creating, redeeming and sanctifying action through Christ and the Holy Spirit. These divine acts include the prefigurations in the old covenant and all that is fulfilled in the incarnation of God's Son: his teaching, death, resurrection, glorification and second coming, together with the sending of God's Holy Spirit.

All responses also generally expressed gratitude for BEM's emphasis on the cosmic and eschatological dimensions of the eucharist as a joyful paschal and pentecostal celebration, a real participation (however explained) in the Lord's all-embracing reign over the whole of creation in history, and in God's kingdom yet to be fully realized at the end of the ages. The use of the "Lima liturgy", though not officially a part of BEM, by churches of Reformed traditions is also pointed to in the churches' responses as an event of important ecumenical significance.

Also referred to in one way or another in a majority of the responses are the essential ethical implications of eucharistic worship and action, and the connection made between eucharistic communion and moral behaviour. All also generally agreed that the eucharist is enacted by the Lord for the participation of all the faithful in the meal which is offered and received by all committed believers, and not just those who preside. However, whatever the differences among the churches, no response to BEM called for unconditional participation in the supper.

In the section on ministry virtually every response to BEM commended the document for rooting the ordained ministry, however understood, in the ministry of Christ and in the common ministry of all of the baptized believers, that is, in the ministry of the church as a whole and the varied ministries of all of her members — though many responses faulted the statement for failing to do so with sufficient clarity and depth.

Virtually all responses also agreed that Christ's church requires a special ministry of leadership for the sake of its identity, continuity and solidarity in worship, mission, witness and service. And they also affirmed that this special ministry is rooted both in God's call and the affirmation of the body of believers, with some rite of appointment, enablement and recognition involving prayer and the invocation of God's grace and power in the gathered assembly.

All responses without exception affirmed the ministry of women in the church, whatever the given church's position on ordination and apostolic succession: the churches affirmed the propriety and need for the services

of women in areas previously held in many churches predominantly, if not exclusively, by men. These include such ministries as teaching, theological scholarship, missionary work, pastoral and spiritual counseling, administration and church representation in ecclesiastical and public life.

On the issue of the "representation" of Christ, virtually all responses insisted that every baptized person represented the Lord in his priestly, prophetic and royal presence and activity, with those in special ministries (particularly that of leadership) doing so in special ways, both within the body — especially during liturgical acts — and to those outside. Whatever their views on ordination and apostolic succession, all also agreed that every ministry is accomplished according to apostolic faith and apostolic tradition — however these are understood and practised in the given community.

Critical issues

Critical issues about baptism, eucharist and ministry remain. The draft report describes them in detail (we shall soon debate how successfully). These are not just issues which lay beyond the scope of BEM but are pointed to by it, such as the relationship between scripture and tradition, or the nature and boundaries of the church, or the essential elements of apostolic doctrine — all of which remain central to the ongoing work of our Commission. Nor are they merely subjects which BEM deals with insufficiently, such as the service of women in the church, or the relationship between apostolic tradition and apostolic succession, or the issue of the universal unanimity and worldwide witness of Christians (the so-called "ministry of Peter") — also crucial subjects with which Faith and Order will continue to be concerned. The critical issues still facing us in relation to baptism, eucharist and ministry also include subjects which BEM has specifically dealt with, but where confusion and misunderstanding and disagreement yet persist. Among these are such issues as the relationship between word and sacrament, and the meaning of sacrament; the relationship between baptism, chrismation and eucharist; and the nature of the ordained ministry, particularly the ministry of ecclesial presidents and overseers, and its relationship to the ministry of all baptized believers.

In addition to such specific issues, some general criticisms of BEM were expressed in the churches' responses. Third-world churches, which presented almost a third of the responses, for example, still saw too much of classical concerns and ways of expression in the statement, while some

in the “other” worlds complained that BEM had abandoned — or softened or compromised — too much of what they (each in their own way) consider to be theologically and practically essential. Many wanted the document to be clearer about “sacrament”. Others had trouble with the use of the term “sign”. Some wanted the language of the document to be more “inclusive”. Some wanted it more biblical. And others wanted it more in line with the language of their particular tradition.

BEM: promise and challenge

This was all to be expected (though perhaps by some of us not to such an extent!) since BEM is but one step in an ecumenical process. As a “convergence statement” composed by people from separated churches and diverse traditions, it calls neither for surrender, nor compromise, nor total acceptance — and certainly not for ambiguity or confusion. It calls rather for common affirmations by divided churches struggling towards universal communion. The document in this sense seems to be successfully serving its purpose. It is what my colleague at St Vladimir’s, Fr John Breck, has poetically described as “a watershed and a harbinger”. It marks the climax of one stage of a movement and the heralding of things yet to come.

The BEM process, with all of its shortcomings, has shown the way for ecumenical work on the global level. In this lies its unique ecumenical significance, and certainly its significance for the future work of Faith and Order. It is a specific work of limited scope. It is done slowly, with the pain and patience which such labour demands. It urges us to listen to the other’s story with compassion, to share the other’s experience with empathy, and to bear the other’s burden with mercy. It warns us to refuse to caricature the other’s concerns, to refuse to ridicule the other’s convictions, to refuse to trespass the other’s time-conditioned limitations so that divine truth may appear with its compelling clarity. It calls us to rejoice in affirming what is of God in the other, while charitably questioning that with which we cannot agree, so that we can claim God’s truth as our own — the common treasure of God’s people. It enables us to see that in doing this, we lose nothing of our own, since in a real sense as Christians we have nothing of our own. All is from God for the joy — and the judgment — of all.

The BEM process also challenges us to change, to admit our mistakes, to be freed from our errors. It calls us to repent in the literal sense of the term: to be transformed in the renewal of our minds in order to show what is good and acceptable and perfect (Rom. 12:2). It encourages us to do so

gladly, in the face of truth which cannot be denied. It inspires us to look beyond our own interests to the interests of others, and to give up everything we can which is no longer necessary or useful for the defence of truth, but stands rather as an obstacle to mutual comprehension and actual communion. It instructs us to avoid styles and categories unserviceable to the common task in favour of expressions and images drawn from the Bible and apostolic church life which all churches can claim and in which all can commune, whatever the contexts and conditions of their present situations. And it tells us, finally, to submit all things to the judgment of the believing community so that what is of God may be recognized and received under the Holy Spirit's guidance, and so that those who are of God may themselves be approved and received. "... for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized" (1 Cor. 11).

The draft of the Commission's report is before us. It is an awesome document. How can more than 1,300 pages of 185 official church responses of such varying character, style and content be adequately summarized and evaluated by an international ecumenical body of more than a hundred people? It seems a task greater than raising the dead. But the dead are raised. BEM exists. The churches which were willing and able have spoken. The process goes on. And our report will be written.

In the light of world events — not only political and economic, but philosophical and religious — our Commission's report on the churches' responses to BEM will be a little thing. But for us who believe, it will be one more small step taken in obedience to Christ who commands his little flock to be faithful in little so that they may be set over much and enter into his joy. Let us carry on our work in this spirit, in fidelity to God with whom all things are possible — including the production of a report befitting the dignity of the One who has gathered us for this purpose.

BEM as an Invitation and a Challenge: Report on a Local Experience (Japan)

AKIRA IMAHASHI

1. Translation of the Lima document

A joint ecumenical project was developed to translate BEM. That proved more difficult than had been anticipated since, for example, several different words in Japanese are used by different traditions to translate the word "bishop". But when it was eventually finished, the translation was published in the name of the faith and order commission of the National Christian Council and the ecumenical commission of the Roman Catholic Church.

2. Background of BEM reception and reactions

Some initial reactions were collected and published together with the original text, and were widely distributed and studied. Why did BEM attract such attention? First, because the ecumenical soil had been prepared by co-operation in practical socio-political areas. Second, because there was already an ongoing ecumenical study of ministry in Japan, so that the time was ripe for BEM. BEM did not come into a vacuum.

3. BEM as an invitation and a challenge

The manner in which the United Church of Christ in Japan was established under political pressure in 1941 did not allow for developing doctrinal agreement among the constituent churches, or for their coming to a common identity. BEM has stimulated a reconsideration of the church and its identity. The issues which it raises have also led churches to reflect on their practice of worship and have led to a certain revival of worship.

4. Some critical remarks

We feel that BEM fails to deal adequately with a situation such as ours in Japan, in which Christianity is a younger movement. BEM seems too much oriented to established institutions, and it does not treat sufficiently the issues of the ministry of the laity or of women. These points are illustrated in the "Critical response to BEM as a whole" from the official response of my own church.¹

Coming from the well-established churches with their strong traditions and a corresponding mentality, this document fails to consider adequately the problems and situation of the "younger", "minority" churches situated where Christianity is understood more as "movement" than "institution". As a result the overall effect, especially in regard to "ministry", comes across as protective, conservative, and insufficiently missional or reformatioal.

It is important to find agreement in terms of doctrine and order, to be sure; but this is achieved at the cost of weakening the thrust for unity in terms of situational context. There should be much greater concern for the ministry of the laity and much greater clarity in regard to the ministry of women. Consideration is needed also for the baptism and ministry of the mentally disabled.

5. What has been going on since?

Here many examples can be given. A new book of worship is being prepared, and its section on holy communion has been impacted by the BEM text on the eucharist. BEM has been influential in the ongoing study of ministry. A new study by the National Council on baptism and confirmation will be influenced by BEM. In many ways, BEM has prepared and fostered the ecumenical context for establishing new relationships between the churches. Various acts of mutual recognition have already occurred.

6. The future of the BEM process

Several issues need further study and will continue to receive attention. These include the questions of scripture, Tradition and traditions, and the structure of the ministry.

NOTE

¹ United Church of Christ in Japan, in *Churches Respond to BEM: Vol. II*, Max Thurian ed., Faith and Order Paper No. 132, Geneva, WCC, 1986, p.290.

Statement on “Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry”

MARGUERITE FASSINO

In the name of the Protestant Methodist Church in Benin to which I belong, I greet all the members of this esteemed gathering. I come with a mixture of pleasure and apprehensiveness to draw your attention to the fruits of the work done on BEM in my country.

Our response to BEM

My church set to work to carry out the task entrusted to its members by the WCC at the Vancouver Assembly, and initiated the study of the Lima document during the pastoral retreat of November 1985. Each of the sections of the text was then examined, one each year, so that the work lasted for three years, from 1985 to 1988.

All the members of my church were interested in this task and it has enabled the church:

- to clarify its understanding of the three concepts baptism, eucharist and ministry;
- to re-examine its practices in the three areas concerned;
- to question some of its practices;
- and to conscientize its members on this theme.

Our reflections on BEM may be summed up in this way. It seemed, for instance, that since baptism is a free gift of God and a sign of total commitment for life, contributions towards the financial life of the church should not be sought prior to baptism. The administration of baptism should be subject to no conditions other than the confession of faith and the faithfulness of the candidate or their parents.

The eucharist symbolizes the confirmation of baptism and the attestation that the baptized person really benefits from the love and forgiveness of God. This means that many problems are raised when the eucharist is

not administered to some church members for such reasons as their practice of polygamy; and this non-administration remains a matter for theological — not sociological — reflection.

As to the ministry, the study of BEM has enabled church members to understand better their role in evangelism, which is their primary task (and not that of the bishops and pastors only). It has also enabled them to become more aware of the need for ecumenism, especially among church authorities.

These few comments give the essential contents of my church's report on BEM. The work done was supported in practical ways. For example, for some little time adult members who are candidates for baptism have been able to receive both that sacrament and the Lord's supper on the same day. As for adolescents, the authorized age for admission to the eucharist has been reduced from 18 to 12 or 10 years of age, as children who, as youngsters, have been integrated in the church by their parents have the spiritual maturity needed to enable them to have communion with God. By delaying administration of confirmation to children the church appeared to be inhibiting their spiritual growth instead of contributing to its development.

Distribution of the Lord's supper at all services of worship has long been accepted in principle and is among the things to be tried out in practice, but as we do not have enough pastors we are still obliged to celebrate this sacrament only once a month.

The broader situation in my country

The two regional theological institutions — the Roman Catholic seminary of St Gall of Ouidah and the Protestant school of theology at Porto Novo — considered BEM during their annual ecumenical meetings of 1986 and 1987. Each attempted to explain and justify their doctrine and practice of baptism and the eucharist, with a great deal of tact and discernment, though this did not prevent the Roman Catholic students from stating certain caveats such as (I quote):

We must protect the truth of our faith and the orthodoxy of our presentation and not sacrifice essentials to a concern for an illusory and fleeting reconciliation.

The primary aim of these annual meetings, as arranged by mutual agreement, was to get to know each other and to attempt ecumenical dialogue on the doctrinal problems. It is our hope that all these steps will

one day lead to a start in implementing the unity we seek, for we have to know each other better in order to understand each other better.

In the Inter-Confessional Council, in which several Protestant churches (majority churches and Pentecostalist churches) come together, the study of BEM was undertaken, but less deeply. This is because divergent points of view and differing interpretations still inhibit better understanding of the Lima document and its use in the interests of unity. The difficulty lies in the very uneven levels of spiritual maturity in the member churches of this Council.

At all events, popularizing BEM in my country has not been as easy as it might have been if all the churches which should be working for unity had been made sensitive to such issues. A significant example is the hesitancy of the Roman Catholic Church about major co-operation with my church, and this hesitancy has become more marked since the Inter-Confessional Council was set up at the instigation of the Methodist Church in Benin.

On this matter we should like to ask you whether, through its officers, our Faith and Order Commission has sufficiently promoted BEM with the Roman Catholic Church.

The future: hopes for renewal

As to the future use of BEM for renewal, this document will, as a source for theological reflection, make it possible for the churches to be more faithful in interpreting biblical passages and to avoid discrepancies and distortions which simply present a false picture of the word of God. This will be a big contribution towards the development of spiritual life and the reconciliation of members who have suffered only too much from false interpretations that have simply aggravated divisions.

The Lima liturgy is a source of inspiration to my church, especially on major occasions such as the synodal service in March 1989, during which three pastors were ordained. This liturgical wealth makes it possible to deepen spiritual life through praise and will help everyone to feel at ease when they worship in each other's company.

The future: ecumenical relations

In my country much remains to be done to achieve a real consensus. In some countries the use of BEM by the Christian councils is contributing to a strengthening of ecumenical relations, but in Benin the Inter-Confessional Council as a gathering of churches is working towards unity in its own way through biblical studies, prayer meetings and so on. In that

body baptism administered by the member churches is mutually respected, but not necessarily recognized by all. As to the eucharist and the ministry, mutual recognition is not possible at the present stage for many reasons, such as lack of numbers in the ordained ministry, the lack of interest in training them, and the great variety of ideas about the eucharist (for example, the use of eggs within the liturgy by one of the member churches).

Conclusion

Study of the Lima document has made it possible for the members of my church to shake off the lassitude which was weighing them down in some fields, to begin to get used to terms such as "eucharist", to ask questions about some traditions in our confession and, above all, to be even more open to a really conscious ecumenism.

Despite the various obstacles encountered and still remaining, BEM continues to be a rallying-point which is full of promise in many ways.

Towards a Statement to the Churches on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry

MARY TANNER

You have already heard of the decision of the Standing Commission to prepare both a substantial report and a short statement.

However, time ran out on the drafting group. The ink was barely dry on the last page of the substantive report as we boarded our planes at the end of the drafting meeting in May. But perhaps that was just as well, for the short statement we have spoken about is not a statement of a few members of the Standing Commission but a statement from the community of this Plenary Commission. It is right that it should emerge from this group gathered in this place and thus benefit from, and incorporate, the reflections of the whole Commission of Faith and Order and not simply the insights of a few.

My task is to offer you some of the embryonic thoughts about the short statement which the steering group on BEM, the Standing Commission and the drafting groups have explored. In doing this my intention is to stimulate you to offer your comments on the statement in the plenary discussion that follows: what should the style of the statement be — what should it contain — to whom ought it to be addressed? It will then be the task of one of the groups on BEM to listen to what is said, to draft a 6- or 7-page statement and to bring it back later in the week for the approval of the Commission. We can then send it to the churches and to the Canberra Assembly.

I want to offer you some thoughts on: to whom the statement is addressed; the style and character of the statement; the contents of the statement.

To whom is the statement addressed?

Clearly we owe a response to those who have replied to us on behalf of their churches, “at the highest level of authority”. But we also want to

speak to all who have been caught up in the BEM process — in theological commissions, in church synods at whatever level, in ecumenical councils, in theological seminaries, in local parish and ecumenical groups, in women's groups and individuals who have picked up the text and found that it spoke to them. And we must think of those who have not yet read BEM, but who by reading our statement may be encouraged to find a copy of BEM and enter the process that way round.

The style and character of the statement

Once we have said this about the addressees it means the text must be readable, free from the awful, impenetrable jargon that characterizes so many ecumenical texts and is guaranteed to switch people off. There is the rich language of the tradition to draw upon, contemporary stories to include, and new images to offer. But perhaps above all it needs to be "shot through" with doxological language. We have to communicate our thankfulness — thankfulness to the churches and to all who have engaged with us in the BEM process: and we need to express that thankfulness in such a way that our readers are caught up in our thanksgiving to God, in the power of whose Spirit we have been drawn into this pilgrimage to unity.

Thankfulness then should characterize our statement: but not thankfulness for a convergence text and six heavy volumes of responses — rather thankfulness for all that has happened and continues to happen in the BEM process, "a convergence process" which is part of, an essential part of, the pilgrimage to unity. This BEM process represents an unprecedented event in the life of the churches, a *kairos* in the ecumenical movement. We can be thankful that in their responses we see churches no longer describing their Christian identity over against one another, in polarized and entrenched language of the past, but recognizing and claiming a common language to express their experience of the central gifts of baptism, eucharist and ministry, gifts that God offers to the people, to bind us together in God's own Trinitarian life of communion and love.

This means that certain facts will have to be included: the process began in 1927 when the agenda was defined; a watershed was reached in Lima with the maturing of the text of BEM; the process has gathered momentum in the production of thousands of copies in 31 translations, and in six volumes of official church responses to the text; another watershed is reached in the evaluation of the responses in the full report. Our short statement ought to make people want to read the larger report.

All of this is worth celebrating. But our thanksgiving ought not to obscure the fact that the process has not gone wide enough or penetrated deeply enough — there are areas of the world, and churches, which have barely begun to respond; and we have not been sensitive enough to the difficulties of translation, or the problems sometimes posed by our Western style of working. Nor ought we to obscure the fact that the text is a convergence text and not a consensus text, and that the responses, as well as affirming so much, also record points where differences remain and where work is still to be done.

The content of the statement

The statement will need to record thankfully the important convergences in understanding in baptism, eucharist and ministry which are registered in the responses of the churches. The churches will expect some indication of where advances have been made, where differences remain, and how Faith and Order intends working on them, particularly on the three underlying issues identified by the churches themselves: scripture and Tradition, sacrament and sacramentality, and perspectives on ecclesiology. We shall need to indicate where we are and where we are going in the convergence process. I will not speak of these. Tom Hopko has already indicated what they are. His fresh summary might well serve as a basis for this part of our statement.

But might not the statement also be the place for challenging the churches a bit more strongly? I wonder if they, or we for that matter, realize the full extent of the “time bomb” of the Lima text. It was the genius of the second and third questions to the churches¹ that made clear that convergence at the level of words can never be enough. A credible reception means embodying those convergences in life. We ought not to agree on one thing in our words and contradict that in the way we live. There are some marvellous signs that some churches have begun to *reform* themselves; we must rejoice in those:

- the Uniting Church in Australia said: “We find ourselves challenged to be more vigilant against indiscriminate baptism, against the willingness of some to comply with a request for re-baptism, and against any confusion of baptism with naming ceremonies....”²
- A number of responses talk of more frequent celebrations of the eucharist.
- The Finnish Orthodox Church says: “It is good that the BEM document also reminds the Orthodox of the original nature of the

ministry of a deacon. Nowadays there are many possibilities and needs to develop the ministry of service in our church, too.”³

It is in receiving the convergences in life — in re-forming themselves — that our churches will become more unitable with, and so will move towards one another. So both thanksgiving for changes that are happening and also a response to the challenge are to a more costly and painful re-formation in life, is surely called for from us all.

We should rejoice too in the signs that churches are using the text as a basis for changed relationships with one another. In England the text has become “a charter” for closer ecumenical living. This has happened, for example, in local ecumenical projects where Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists, Reformed, Roman Catholics and Moravians, in different combinations and to different degrees, share a deepening koinonia: a communion grounded in their common baptism, built up in mutual eucharistic hospitality, a real sharing (though not interchangeability) of ministry, and developing forms of ecumenical oversight. The convergences in BEM enable a confident sharing in life which results in a strengthening of all in each place for mission and evangelism in village and in town.

We need to challenge the churches. Can they recognize the fruitful elements of the church in others who also affirm the theological convergence of BEM? Can they, on the basis of this convergence, move into a closer sharing of their Christian life and witness? What steps can they take together now to show that we are no longer strangers but pilgrims together? What can they share *now* in Christian life even though they are not free to move to full sacramental communion?

Thankfulness, then, for what has happened needs to be the keynote of our statement. But combined with this must be a challenge to the churches to change. And there must also be a pledge from us as the Faith and Order Commission to continue, in partnership with the churches, the search for *essential* agreement in faith, agreement which is “sufficient and required” for the proper unity and rich diversity of the church. The search will need all the patience we and our churches can muster; it is the price we pay for the sinful divisions of the past and for our lives of alienation. The reconciliation of the memories, the healing of the memories is long and costly. And when differences of principle and practice continue, our will to continue the search, to stay together in the ecumenical movement despite the cost, can even now testify to a profound unity and communion which is beyond that which the world knows. We would do well to acknowledge that.

There is work to be done on the other two elements necessary for visible unity: on the common confession of the apostolic faith, and on the question of what are the structures of decision making and teaching, those structures of grace, which would enable us to decide and proclaim together — and all of this within the context of the unity of the church and the renewal of human community. How much of this can we, ought we to promise the churches in our statement?

Close your eyes for a moment. I want to take some of you back to Lima and to help others join us there. Imagine that beautiful oasis outside Lima — the sun shining, a stream wending its way through our oasis, rich vegetation, flowering, scented trees and shrubs. Recall the moment when Nikos Nissiotis asked, is the text of BEM “mature enough to go to the churches?” We all knew there were imperfections in the text, there were issues like that of primacy on which we had only just begun to focus, but everyone without exception agreed — yes, the text is mature enough to go to the churches and we got up in silent thanksgiving for that moment — none of us could have imagined the effect the text would have. I remember in the silence looking out of the room across our beautiful oasis. We were hemmed in by a high barbed-wire-covered fence: outside the barren hills of Peru, barren beyond imagination, rose sharply: where the last scrubby bit of vegetation gave way to the desert were a few shacks, mostly half built, where the poor of Lima, unimaginably poor, eked out some sort of existence. It was a parable: the church in its comfortable oasis, safeguarding its life-giving treasures of baptism, eucharist and ministry, encircled by a world of poverty and starvation. Unless what we were doing in our oasis had something — no, everything — to do with the dark and restricted places of the world, then we ought to give up. That is the context in which we are called, called absolutely, to receive the unity that God wills to give us.

That is the vision that has spoken to the congregations and groups to whom I have spoken. Can our statement communicate that vision?

* The final version of the Commission's statement appears on p.25.

NOTES

- ¹ The second question to which each WCC member church was asked to respond "at the highest appropriate level of authority" referred to "the consequences your church can draw from [BEM] for its relations and dialogues with other churches, particularly with those churches which also recognize the text as an expression of the apostolic faith". The third question asked about "the guidance your church can take from [BEM] for its worship, educational, ethical and spiritual life and witness". See *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper No. 111, Geneva, WCC, 1982, p.x.
- ² Max Thurian ed., *Churches Respond to BEM: Official Responses to the "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" Text*, Vol. IV, Faith and Order Paper No. 137, Geneva, WCC, 1987, p.157.
- ³ Max Thurian ed., *Churches Respond to BEM: Official Responses to the "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" Text*, Vol. II, Faith and Order Paper No. 132, Geneva, WCC, 1986, p.28.

Group Discussion and Plenary Action

Process of Reflection

In Budapest the Commission focused on the ecumenical experience and implications of "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" in two ways. The first was the process of preparation, review and adoption of a statement to the churches giving thanks for the BEM process and looking to further steps towards unity. This text, entitled "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry: the Continuing Call to Unity", occupied the Commission in plenary over most of its meeting at Budapest; written and revised by a small group, it was heard and enjoyed plenary debate through several drafts. This was one of the two formal statements issued at Budapest by the commission to the churches; it may be found, together with a concise summary of the relevant plenary discussions and action, on p.25 above.

The second focus came as the Commission reviewed the breadth and depth of ecumenical experiences with BEM around the world, and as it commented on the draft text "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry 1982-89: Report on the Process and Responses". All commissioners were involved in one of five groups which worked (on the basis of their own experience, of plenary papers, responses and discussions, and in light of the draft text on the "Process and Responses") on specific aspects of the BEM process: on issues of scripture and Tradition, ecclesiology, and sacrament and sacramentality; in discussing the impact of BEM in the lives of the churches; and in charting major issues for further study. The report from each group offered a careful summary of the discussion which had taken place (there was not time for some groups to review their report

before it was presented in plenary). After all five reports had been presented in plenary they were discussed together and voted upon in a single motion, as recounted below on p.100.

The reports from two of the groups (“Scripture and Tradition: Report on Process and Responses” and “Chapter V. Major Issues Demanding Further Theological Work [Sacraments and Sacramentality]”) brought detailed comments for the revision of the preparatory text “Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry 1982-89: Report on the Process and Responses”. As explained in the editor’s introduction, these two group reports, and comparable sections of the others, have been transmitted to the BEM steering group but are not included here.

In addition the Commission sought to “take note of” the preparatory text “BEM 1982-89: Report on the Process and Responses”. Intensive discussion took place in plenary on how this document might best be used in the continuing work on BEM. A summary account of this discussion, and the ensuing plenary action, is given at the end of this section (p.102 below).

Group Report. Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry: Perspectives on Ecclesiology

1. There is a common agreement in the group on the opportunity and importance for Faith and Order to start a major study on ecclesiology. This study needs to proceed in close inter-relationship with other Faith and Order studies, in particular the work on unity and renewal, along with apostolic faith, which need to be continued.

2. This study on ecclesiology should not only build upon the results of the BEM texts and process, but should try to integrate all the work done by Faith and Order in the field of ecclesiology during the sixty years of its existence: for instance, the vision of conciliar fellowship, the vision of visible unity articulated with more precision in each Assembly since New Delhi, apostolic faith, unity of the church and renewal of human community, unity and mission, etc.

3. In this line, some spoke of an “ecclesiology of convergence”, trying to identify and to deepen the various ecclesiological approaches already present in these different studies. This would allow the recognition of the legitimacy of a certain diversity in ecclesiology, a diversity already

existing in the New Testament. There is no need to aim at a monolithic ecclesiology. We should try to explore and to clarify which degree of diversity can be legitimate.

4. On any future study of common perspectives for an “ecclesiology of convergence” — after dealing with the essential nature and tasks of the church — a central theme of the study should be: “The Conciliar Life of the Church”. The Faith and Order studies in the 1960s on the councils should be taken up again and the issues of the local and universal mission, the problem of the primacy-episcopacy relation and the need for a diversity of conciliar structures within the one church should be brought into this framework.

5. There seems to be a general agreement on the main orientations indicated in the draft report on BEM for future work. Nevertheless a few complementary perspectives were suggested by a large number of members of the group.

a) The overall perspective of mission was stressed again and again as being an absolutely necessary dimension of the church and of all ecclesiology.

b) A general wish was that the Trinitarian perspective should be present at every stage of the study. This might help to integrate various aspects: unity and mission, Spirit and creation, theological presuppositions for inculturation, etc. Some would like to see developed more deeply the idea of the Trinity as model of the church, which would allow harmonious integration between unity and diversity.

c) The eschatological perspective deserves to be developed.

d) The concept of *koinonia* is a very rich and comprehensive one, but it should not become an exclusive model for the church, and should not lead to a self-centred ecclesiology. It must be kept open to the involvement of the church in the world: an ecclesiology as appropriate to context, with the church as a serving and suffering community.

e) It should be noted that those who insist strongly on the involvement of the church in its context do not thereby reject the sacramental dimension of the church.

f) The theme of covenant should be introduced, because it is a part of the self-understanding of several Christian traditions.

g) The concept of “instrument”, when applied to the church, is objected to by some traditions, sometimes for very different reasons. This should be studied carefully.

6. The study on ecclesiology could be an opportunity to start exploring the possibility of a study on the question of authority and the ways of

common teaching and decision making (as the third aspect of visible unity).

7. While devoting its best energies to its specific tasks and studies, Faith and Order should always remain open to the ecclesiological questions raised in other units or departments of the WCC. This could contribute to a more harmonious integration of Faith and Order in the whole of the WCC. The contribution of Faith and Order to the preparation of the Canberra Assembly in 1991 could be seen along these lines.

Group Report. Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry: Discussion Synopsis

1. There were three general categories of local responses to BEM shared in the group. They were:

a) *Minimal local effect: contextual concerns.* These reports emphasized that political and/or economic situations did not allow for BEM's distribution and for response by local churches. The BEM discussion is seen as a luxury in these cases. For example, Protestant churches are considered a "sect" in Mexico by the local Roman Catholic hierarchy, and although it has been sent to a few Protestant seminaries, there is little chance for mutual dialogue here. There were some tendencies even here, however, towards responding to BEM in these difficult contextual situations. BEM is discussed in Brazil, for example, by the Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterian churches. BEM is also generally acknowledged in South Africa, yet remains a painful point of departure, beginning with baptism: this is because baptism itself is used as a means to re-inforce apartheid (Bolivia, Mexico, Brazil, Korea [until two years ago] and South Africa).

b) *Minimal effect: theological concerns.* No official stands or responses to BEM were reported, yet even here there are still some favourable tendencies. BEM has, to a small extent, been distributed unofficially to seminaries and church leaders (Southern Baptists, USA; Southern Baptists, Thailand).

c) *Considerable effect: theological and contextual concerns.* In most of these cases BEM is being, or already has been, translated into local languages. These translations, as well as the French, German and English versions, have been and/or are being studied. Much positive and negative criticism has been generated. There has been a particularly active interchange between Protestant and Roman Catholic bodies on both leadership

and seminary levels. Some (Ghana, the Philippines, the Mar Thoma in India, Malaysia) have begun or are already fully in the process of bringing BEM to the "grassroots" level (Orthodox in the USA, Japan, Indonesia, Thailand and the above-mentioned areas).

2. Possible concerns for future work:

- 1) Considering the eucharist section more seriously as it pertains to justice issues.
- 2) The baptism section may help foster a deeper sense of community in some local churches.
- 3) Study BEM in terms of racism.
- 4) BEM must not be taken out of the context of other WCC/Faith and Order efforts, e.g., the community of women and men.
- 5) Reflecting on the pain of experiencing "closed" communion by both the Roman Catholics and Orthodox.
- 6) Christian living should not end at the eucharistic table.
- 7) Perhaps this document can be put into a missional and contextual setting.
- 8) Be alert that eucharistic sharing could cause chaos and be of little help towards unity. We should first understand the integrity of the sacrament.
- 9) View the recognition of each other's baptism as a positive signal. There is a deep need for solidarity in community.
- 10) Responses must be more than academic, they must be a product of the contextual experience as well.
- 11) We must further develop our sensitivity to the various situations people face.

Group Report. Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry:
Major Issues for Further Study

I. Ministry

A. Ordination of women

1. The responses from the churches make it clear that ordination of women is far too important an issue to be relegated to a brief footnote in BEM. What Christians say about the ordained ministry says something

important about the kind of community we understand the church to be and the value we place on various kinds of ministries. The ordination of women, therefore, has symbolic power not only because of what it signals about the church and its ministry, but also because of what it conveys about the church in mission to the whole human community.

2. Although the ordination of women remains controversial among the churches, the pain felt by people on both sides needs to be heard and respected since the theological conviction is as strong on the one side as on the other.

3. Further ecumenical study on the issue needs to be broadly based and rooted in a re-examination of scripture and Tradition. Account also needs to be taken of the process by which the Holy Spirit guides the church into new understandings and practices — as scripture and Tradition speak afresh in every age through “living tradition”.

4. Continued exploration should focus on what it means to “represent Christ” in the ordained ministry; the relationship of the ordination of women to the sacraments, especially to sacramental “power”; the ordination of women to different forms of ministry (e.g., in the Orthodox church to the re-introduction of the ancient order of women deacons); and the relationship of ordained ministry to the ministry of all baptized members. Such exploration would be of immense value not only to various churches struggling with these issues, but also to bilateral conversations.

B. Other issues

5. The relationship between Christian leadership and authority or power; an evaluation of the threefold ministry; and, because we will not ultimately escape the question of primacy, an examination of the “Petrine ministry”, are other “ministry issues” which need further work.

II. Reception

6. It is imperative that the response of the churches to BEM be treated as the first, not the final, stage of the reception process.

7. “Reception” means different things in different churches — while the process of reception is relatively simple in some churches it is very complicated in others. This difference needs to be acknowledged and respected. Despite this, it is important to build into the reception process appropriate forms of mutual accountability. The responses have indicated some (at times, radical) insights or “new learnings” which churches have received through BEM, and many churches have stated that these insights

will have significant consequences for their own faith and practice. It would be helpful to monitor the ways in which these commitments have been fulfilled.

8. Unless “grassroots level” reception occurs, reception will not really have happened. The theological language of the Lima text, however, means that it is not always easily understood at all levels and in all contexts. The text, however, ought not to be re-written. It must stand as it is in its own historical context. Nor should a “convergence document” be made into a “consensus statement”. The spiral process of reception, nevertheless, can (and must) proceed on the basis of the Lima text (now taken together with the six volumes of the churches’ responses) by developing a cluster of strategies which will make the contents of BEM and the responses available in appropriate forms for various confessional, cultural, organizational and interfaith contexts. These strategies will include study guides at a number of levels of linguistic and theological sophistication.

9. As we continue with the reception process it is important to realize that while the achievements of BEM have been considerable, many churches have not (yet) recognized the significance and relevance of the text for ministry and mission. Further reflection on the relationship of BEM to the mission of the church could facilitate the reception process.

10. Reception will also be facilitated by intra-WCC collegiality (e.g., relating BEM to studies such as JPIC and *Mission and Evangelism: an Ecumenical Affirmation*) and by drawing on the experiences of united and uniting churches.

III. Ecclesiology

11. Further work must be done on ecclesiology. While BEM’s ecclesiology is implicit it is not explicit; and its implicit ecclesiology seems to presuppose a view of the church to which a significant number of denominations have difficulty relating.

12. This difficulty is expressed most often by churches for whom the faith of believers, along with such issues as baptism, lay presidency and the proclamation of the word as “verbal statement” are more central than the BEM text conveys. Indeed, at some points in the report on the churches’ responses, members of these churches feel that BEM’s convergence is portrayed as consensus — based on the implicit ecclesiological presuppositions referred to above. Hence they call for a more broadly-based study on ecclesiology.

Plenary Discussion and Action

The reports from the working groups on "Scripture and Tradition", "Ecclesiology", and "Major Issues: Sacrament and Sacramentality" were read by Coralie Ling, Frans Bouwen, and Robert Bertram respectively. The plenary moderator asked permission to transmit these documents to the Standing Commission, putting the following motion:

That these three working group reports be received by the plenary and, together with notes from the working groups, be referred to the Standing Commission and the steering group for their use in carrying out the future programme of the study as recommended here.

This was approved with 2 negative votes and 1 abstention. William Tabbernee then read the report of the group on "Major Issues for Further Study Emerging from BEM", and this was slated for consideration (it was noted subsequently that the reports from all the BEM groups would be discussed in plenary). In a later plenary the final group report, "BEM: Discussion Synopsis", was read by Kyriaki Fitzgerald, and the five reports were discussed together. A total of 11 interventions were brought in this process.

In considering the report on ecclesiological issues it was noted that the kingdom of God "precisely includes the idea of *koinonia* as eschatological fulfilment", with the eucharist being "a symbolic realization of the community in peace and justice".

The consideration of "BEM: Discussion Synopsis" focused upon issues of scripture. A study was proposed "of the authority of scripture as it actually functions in the work of Faith and Order and in BEM": this would continue the important work on scripture and Tradition which had not been furthered, in a serious way, since the Faith and Order world conference in Montreal in 1963. This report's sixfold "schema" concerning scripture was criticized; the question is not whether the churches recognize the authority of scripture (all do) but how they understand that authority to be expressed. We do not need an elucidation of the "criteria which each churches uses" in reading scripture; the issue is "the relation of those criteria to the canonical authority of scripture in the discussion of doctrine".

Speaking to other points raised by this report commissioners emphasized the wide distribution of BEM and the seriousness with which it has been taken by and in the churches, with Thailand as a case in point, and questioned the report's statement that baptism had been used to "reinforce apartheid": this was not true, for example, in Brazil.

The discussion on "sacrament-sacramentality" brought an exchange about "reversing BEM's argument from general (sacramentality) to particular (sacraments)". One speaker asserted that we "should not indulge ourselves in this kind of thinking"; scripture does not refer to "sacrament", the real issue being the shift from the New Testament idea of *mysterion* to the specific "sacraments" of the church. The riposte was offered that the relationship of *mysterion* to sacrament was already clear. There had been no call in the BEM responses to "enumerate" the sacraments, and this should be firmly resisted. It was pointed out that although the members of this group had found difficult BEM's "description of God as 'the principal author of the sacraments'" most of the responses to BEM had, in fact, affirmed this view.

It was said that the comments of this report on "non-sacramental churches" "brings pain" and should be recast. Many such churches simply would not recognize themselves in this language; for them "the real issue is not sacraments but the nature of sacramentality". On other topics there was a call for language which would not imply that the ordination of women had merely "symbolic" power.

During the discussion the reports were affirmed as a fair representation of the views expressed during the group sessions (although not every specific position could be included); some specific additions or corrections were offered to particular reports. The plenary moderator then put the following motion:

The Plenary Commission takes note of the five accounts of the discussion groups on BEM ([Budapest texts numbers] 12,13,14,16 and 18). Although these texts have not been presented to or received by their respective discussion groups and hence do not have the status of group reports, these notes, together with the notes of the plenary discussion, are sent to the Standing Commission for use, as it judges appropriate, in developing Faith and Order's work on the BEM process.

The motion was approved with no negative votes and no abstentions.

* * *

“Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry 1982-89:
Report on the Process and Responses”:
Plenary Discussion and Action

The draft text “Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry 1982-89: Report on the Process and Responses” had been an important basis for the Commission’s work on BEM in Budapest. All commissioners were invited to offer their comments on the text; these would be forwarded to the BEM steering group for its use in revising the text. Meanwhile plenary action was proposed to “take note” formally of the text; after receiving several suggestions the officers brought a motion commending further study of BEM, with the help of this document, in the churches, and directing that chapters III (giving “elucidations” of issues arising from the BEM responses) and V (identifying “major issues” for further work) “should receive special attention in the continued work of Faith and Order”. Plenary discussions on the disposition of the text brought 29 interventions by 14 different persons.

Some commissioners, while grateful for the extensive and careful work which it represented, felt that the text (and particularly chapters IV and V) should not be sent to the churches without having been discussed by the Plenary Commission — or at least the Standing Commission. Others felt that Faith and Order must offer the churches some fruit from its long experience with BEM; they would understand the tentative character of the document, and it was imperative that we recognize their contribution to the process and encourage them to further discussion and action.

Various ideas were suggested to make clear the nature and status of the different parts of the text. The possibility of publishing chapters IV and V separately was put by the moderator to the Commission, and was not accepted. The director offered the following summary of the proposed disposition of the text: after the BEM steering group and advisers have revised the text at their

meeting in December 1989, it will be shared with Standing Commission members for their comments before publication. It would be clear that the "elucidations" had come from the BEM steering group and that, while commissioners have offered comments on the text, the Commission has not formally "adopted" it.

In the course of the discussion a friendly amendment to the officers' motion was accepted by them, but an "addition" to the friendly amendment (which would have required chapters IV and V to be reviewed by the Standing Commission in August 1990) was defeated by a house vote of 17 to 28, with 5 abstentions. The amended motion as finally put to the house was as follows:

The Plenary Commission receives the report on the BEM process and responses. It thanks the churches for their careful, constructive and critical responses, and it encourages them to undertake continued study of BEM with the help of the report. The chapters on elucidations (IV) and major issues (V) should be clearly marked in the report as drafts since they will require further work in Faith and Order with the help of reactions.

The motion as amended was approved by the commission with 42 in favour, 3 opposed and 3 abstentions.

Confessing the Apostolic Faith Together

J.-M.R. TILLARD, O.P.

What is the position today, as the century draws to its close, in regard to the proclamation and attestation of the Christian faith? Apparently the Christian confessions are on the way towards a fellowship of obedience to God with an implicit commitment to the inalienable right of every individual and every human community to respect for its dignity, freedom, distinctive character — a way from which there can be no turning back. Another way of putting it would be to say that they are increasingly proclaiming a single gospel of “service”. In the ecumenical quest, this is undoubtedly an important achievement.

But when it comes to declaring the unique truth concerning God, the final human destiny, the salvation “once and for all” revealed in Jesus Christ, these same communities are far from being united. Though one in a single “service”, they do not appear to be proclaiming a single truth. Though increasingly unanimous in an often heroic altruism and generosity based on the gospel, are they not still incapable of making an unqualified common declaration of what they mean by God, Christ, salvation, the church, the kingdom? Yet the gospel message is indivisibly both an exhortation to the disciples: “Do this!”, and at the same time the communication of truth about God and the divine realities: “Believe this!” The word of God is not just the disclosure of a task. Fundamentally it is the revelation of something from which this task and action flow as the necessary consequence; namely, the being and plan of God, the person and work of Jesus Christ, the nature and mission of the church. Indivisibly, it is both a summons to worship the living God, to praise him for his own sake and because of his work, and at the same time a summons to commitment, to the service of the energy he ceaselessly deploys within the creation and within history.

That being so, Christians, whose identity depends wholly on the word and Spirit of God, cannot authentically be the church together in the communion which God wills so long as they are not united in the confession of the great truths which together constitute the revelation. If their unity is to be authentic, the unity of the faith on which their commitment rests must be authenticated too.

The absence of this unanimity of faith in fact represents a loss of spiritual substance in their service to the human race. The Christian communities have helped to rouse and nourish the conscience of the human community. Clearly, they alone can render to humanity that service which for the gospel tradition is the supreme service — namely: “Go therefore to all nations and make them my disciples; baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all that I have commanded you, and I will be with you always, to the end of time” (Matt. 28:19, Revised English Bible). This is where the service of Christ himself leads. In view of the great dominical commission, to refuse to take seriously the question of the authentic content of the faith either by appealing to other imperatives or taking refuge in other emphases, however generous and noble, could be simply a disguise for cowardly evasion.

I

After centuries of fragmentation, therefore, we need to recover the balance of the truths of the common faith and leave behind both the one-sided emphases which distort that faith and the omissions and silences which eviscerate it. Loyalty to Christ requires us, moreover, to look for the centre of balance of our communion in the faith not at the lowest possible level but where God himself has located it. Since what is at stake is the truth, this enterprise must be conducted in a spirit of disciplined analysis excluding all confessional apologetics and all excessive pragmatism. It must aim at the *id quod requiritur et sufficit*.

This quest of the *id quod requiritur* is all the more necessary in view of the growing general conviction that one of the indispensable tasks of the Christian churches, a task inseparable from the future of evangelism, is the “inculturation” of the common faith in the diversity of cultures.¹ At the time of the Nairobi Assembly (1975) and even three years later at the Bangalore meeting (1978) such an undertaking could still seem a work of supererogation, desirable *ad bene esse*, but today it is coming to be

regarded more and more as a necessity required by the very nature of catholicity. Cultural treasures, the traditions of the peoples, are related to the work of the Creator which salvation, far from destroying, adopts and heals by relating it again to the lordship of Christ (Col. 1:13-20). The one faith is thus "received", translated, confessed, announced and lived in a multitude of cultures, made relevant in an infinity of contexts. Destined to remain always and everywhere the same, it can only remain so in a diversity of forms.

Moreover, this diversity always in some way or other affects the content, even in the case of simple translations from one language into another. Unity requires this diversity to be the diversity of Pentecost, not that of Babel. How is this to be recognized?

The diversity of interpretations of the one faith and styles of incarnation of the gospel message also finds expression in the wide variety of confessional groups. Even in the case of the most ancient churches, every denomination has its distinctive features which lend it its identity. Often this identity is constructed around some fundamental affirmation not found elsewhere, or at all events not with the same emphasis. It also happens that, even though the whole body of great Christian truths is preserved, this fundamental affirmation determines the overall interpretation of the faith.

Undeniably, such a confessional diversity can be an expression of the transcendence of the Christian truth, the clear demonstration of the inherent richness of the faith which no single group of believers on its own can fully express. But this is only on the condition that the fundamental differences do not originate in the omission of vital truths of the faith, nor in the distortion of central affirmations of the given revelation or any serious imbalance in this, nor in undue inflation of secondary points which are allowed to blur the essential.

Very instructive here is the resistance to the reception of the Lima document on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* by certain confessional groups, despite the endorsement of this document by their own representatives in the official dialogue. So deeply has the outlook of such groups been marked by their confessional allegiance that they often make their specific doctrinal position the standard by which everything is judged. They thereby render themselves incapable of really receiving anything which, in the name of unity, calls for re-examination, verification, correction, differentiation, renewal of the distinctive character of their denomination. To refuse any deep and critical self-questioning concerning the distinctive character of the particular confessional doctrine in light

of what the ecumenical community recognizes as the authentic interpretation of the revealed faith, is to block the road to unity by clinging desperately to one's own identity.² The education of faith is the indispensable condition for any documents or decisions which aim to restore the communion of separated communities. Diversity can be legitimate and beneficial but not every diversity is necessarily so. The question is, therefore: what is the diversity which is tolerable? What is the difference which enriches unity, and that which shatters it?³

II

The Faith and Order Commission has been engaged in this search, above all since the Bangalore meeting in 1978. It set out to help the churches and Christian communities to resolve, and to prepare themselves, one day to confess together unanimously the one indivisible apostolic Christian faith. This task — which is infinitely more exacting than that which led to *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* — falls within the specific mandate of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches. According to article III.1 of its Constitution the primary function of the World Council itself is “to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship”. The fellowship in one common confession of faith is the business of the churches. But it is the business of the World Council, and within it of the Faith and Order Commission, to awaken the churches to the necessity of this unity in the confession of the one apostolic faith and then to help them through the difficult way of understanding which leads to this common confession. For the confession of faith is ecclesially all-inclusive.

It need hardly be said that a Christian community confesses its faith by the whole of its life, by the witness of its commitment on behalf of the gospel, by its ethics, by its liturgy. The Western tradition calls the martyrs “confessors of the faith” because their martyrdom is a credo sealed with their blood. The eucharistic anaphora is an act of praise in which the congregation proclaims what it knows God to be, thanks to the revelation to which it adheres in faith. Baptism is celebrated in the water and in the profession of faith in the Triune God and his work.

The fact remains, and this since apostolic times, that what life, action and even death imply must be expressed in words, must be spoken, transcribed, proclaimed. In his or her own personal verbal proclamation, the individual explains to himself, before God and his own conscience,

the conviction which underlies his existence and his action. He states for himself what his life confesses and also makes it known to others, thereby making the content of his personal witness intelligible. Moreover, as the individual hears the proclamation of his denomination, he or she knows whether the personal confession of faith conforms to the community norm. And as he hears the common proclamation of the churches, he knows whether the confession of his group is faithful to the universal rule of faith. In short, by the oral profession of faith, we know what we confess in life and whether in this confession we are confessing the faith *in communione totius Ecclesiae Dei*. It is therefore crucial in any study of the faith to pay heed to its proclamation.

All Christians proclaim the faith. In order to declare this faith, most Christian communities rely on an official formula, a symbol of faith, a creed. The rest, by their very origin distrustful of official orthodox formulas, are nevertheless unable to avoid precise statements of what they believe, if only to explain their rites and moral demands, to propagate their vision of Christianity and defend the gospel. They, too, have an ecclesial statement of faith.

This is where Faith and Order's task lies in regard to the confession of faith. It is concerned with the verbal formulation, the intelligible articulation, the oral or written account of the common faith. This faith is the faith that has been transmitted thanks to the ministry of the apostles and is therefore described as the apostolic faith. However, the perspective is essentially ecumenical: its aim is the universal communion.

III

This determines the method adopted by the Faith and Order Commission. For to be able to claim to confess authentically together one and the same unique apostolic faith by a common act of adherence to this faith, we must first of all be sure that we ourselves truly adhere to it and then that the others also truly adhere to it, however they may express it in their different cultural and confessional traditions.

If a community is to have this certainty of authentically confessing the apostolic faith in the universal fellowship, it needs to be certain that this apostolic faith can be recognized in the community's life and proclamation. It needs to be able to say to the other communities: "What I affirm in this distinctive formulation is the apostolic faith; in this particular tradition, it is this faith which I am trying to live out." The clear implication of

this is that the community itself first recognizes the equivalence between its own cultural and confessional forms, on the one hand, and what the ecclesial fellowship has always considered and continues to consider to be the authentic meaning of the revealed faith, on the other. Otherwise it would run the risk of false witness and therefore of deforming communion. In the interests of unity, therefore, it must test the universality of its own evangelical life and the specific emphasis of its own confessional tradition. Does it recognize here the authentic apostolic faith? The term "recognize" here does not have the legal sense it sometimes bears in ecumenical documents. It simply means to note the presence, to identify the features which guarantee the existence of a reality. The reality in question here is the apostolic faith which precedes the community.

When two communities which differ in culture, language, history and denomination recognize the authentic apostolic faith in what each lives and proclaims, this is because they are objectively in communion with one another in faith, even if they do not actually express this communion in their mutual relationships. They are therefore each able to recognize in the other the unique and indivisible faith. They recognize one another in their faith. This recognition permits them freedom, respect, trust in relation to that which is original and distinctive and perhaps even baffling and disturbing in the other. Their diversity is not located at the level of the faith itself. Their diversity does not divide them at this level. To be quite sure there is no mistake, however, we must verify together the validity of this communion in faith by a lucid and concerted examination of the conception each has of the apostolic faith: is this conception authentic?

The recognition of the apostolic faith calls therefore for a rigorous and objective examination of its content, an interpretation which respects its authentic meaning, a hermeneutic which is not the blind slave of the distinctive confessional tradition or the specific cultural background. But how is the normative interpretation to be found, in particular where no ecclesial magisterium exists? The temptation, surely, is for each to think that the interpretation of its own group is the true one. Confessional apologetics is omnipresent.

The Faith and Order Commission has tried to meet this need by providing all the communities with an instrument, an ecumenical explication ("ecumenical" because produced by and involving all the churches and most of the confessional groups), a full account of the essential content of the traditional faith. To ensure the maximum possible objectivity and to get beyond the confessional disagreements, it was essential that this instrument should, without turning into an academic treatise, be

based on biblical, patristic and historical studies whose findings are accepted in the world of scholarship. In order to avoid presenting the faith as an archaeological exhibit but to show it rather as part of a living tradition, it was also essential to take into account questions and insights deriving from contemporary culture and new human situations. To guide reflection it was also necessary in some instances to comment on the difficulties arising from a profound divergence of interpretations.

As the Commission saw it, therefore, this instrument would not be a new "confession of faith" nor a sort of ecumenical declaration officially fixing the content of the faith. Still less was it meant to be the actual goal of the process proposed by the Commission. It would be a "working text" whose object would be to help the communities to recognize the apostolic faith in their own life, to test it for themselves and to re-appropriate it in the midst of all the questions of our time and, above all, to establish connections of communion with the other communities in which they truly recognize themselves.

But where were we to find the adequate expression of this apostolic faith, one capable of serving as the basis for a presentation of this kind? No random starting point would do! Then again, for centuries none of the symbols of faith (the creeds) had been as widely and as universally recognized as an expression of the apostolic faith as the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. It had been authenticated by its historical "reception". It had even been "received" as such by the Reformation. Moreover, the communities which make no use of doctrinal formulas confess the content of its articles in their preaching. The choice of this particular symbol of faith thus becomes almost automatic. It had the additional advantage of linking the faith we confess today with that of all the ages. Admittedly, certain crucial ecumenical points are not expressly mentioned in it — in particular, the sacramental life and the hierarchical structure of the church. But the Faith and Order Commission is studying these points elsewhere.

The account of the apostolic faith proposed by the Commission as an instrument therefore takes as its framework the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. In making this choice, the intention is not to impose this symbol of faith on the communities which do not use it, even though this use could be seen as desirable. Nor is this choice proposed as the only valid possibility. Nor is it the intention to require all the communities to provide themselves with a confession of faith. The purpose is simply to explain the apostolic faith which this venerable text has expressed authoritatively for centuries, but which other symbols can or could

translate in a way better suited to the requirements of this or that culture, this or that denomination. What is important here is not the creed in its literary form but the truths which it transmits in its various articles, conferring on them the seal of orthodoxy deriving from its origin and its history. It is chosen as a mirror of the Tradition.⁴

At a number of points, therefore, this presentation of truths of the faith need not insist too strongly on the letter of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, since its focus is simply on the significance of the main and essential points of the revealed faith. It is intended to open up the long road of the understanding of the faith which will lead the churches to celebrate together the one unique eucharist, in the certainty that they are giving the same content to the confession, in an act of praise, of that faith which is the eucharistic anaphora — and doing this, indeed, even if their common celebration of the eucharist does not include an explicit proclamation of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.

The Faith and Order Commission knows that the communities which will find themselves in disagreement with important points in this ecumenical account of the apostolic faith will search their consciences. It hopes that, in the solidarity which henceforth binds the churches together, they will make the courageous decision to seek ways and means of arriving at communion with others in living and proclaiming the faith. This is part of the evangelical metanoia.

The document, whose exact title is to be “Towards the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today”, is the first fruit, still far from ripe, of this ambitious and extremely difficult project. Since the Venice colloquium (1978), eleven years of intensive work — consultations of experts, debates in the Commission as a whole (Lima in 1982, Stavanger in 1985), discussions in the annual meetings of the Standing Commission, international consultations, commentaries furnished by theological faculties, studies by national committees of Faith and Order, strenuous meetings of the steering group responsible for the study project, reflection on the part of the permanent secretariat — have produced the text which all Commission members have had in their hands for several months.⁵

In Budapest, a number of comments and decisions will have to be made on certain important points. Then, when the steering group has taken all these comments into account and incorporated the corrections collected in the dossiers, the document will be sent to the churches for study. This study will enhance their awareness of all that is at stake in the calling to fidelity in the apostolic faith. It will also convince them, if necessary, of

the need to confess together, unanimously and in a true communion, the faith on which their very existence rests.

* * *

This project on the apostolic faith — explained, recognized, confessed in full communion — is an ambitious one. But it was as early as the first world conference on Faith and Order in Lausanne in 1927 (in Section IV) that the Commission first saw clearly that this was a task entrusted to it by the Spirit of God.⁶ For in the church of God everything is based radically on the faith, even its sacramental life, even and above all, its mission. In a world in which religions with the mobilizing power of Islam are spreading, in societies in which human reason becomes increasingly exigent and calls for signs of credibility, within a human family which everywhere cries aloud its need of salvation, the churches can no longer keep silent about their faith. But they need to be able to declare this faith together in all its authenticity.

This is their responsibility before God.

NOTES

¹ It is instructive to note the strong emphasis placed by John Paul II on “contextualization” during his journeys to the churches of Africa, Asia and the Pacific. His declarations are often more concrete and realistic than those made by the World Council of Churches. To give just one example from a host of texts: “It should be possible for the Christian faith to be assimilated in the language of each nation and find its application in time-honoured traditions...; it would be a tragedy if there were to be a rupture between the gospel and a culture... An effort must be made at acculturation if the faith is not to remain superficial” (*Documentation catholique*, 82, 1985, 914).

² This point was examined in depth by the sixth assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Dar-es-Salaam in 1977.

³ See the document of the Mixed Catholic-Protestant Committee of France on “Consensus oecuménique et différence fondamentale” (Ecumenical consensus and fundamental difference); cf. DC 84, 1987, pp.40-44. See too the studies conducted by the Institute for Ecumenical Research (Strasbourg, Lutheran) on the subject of the “fundamental difference”.

⁴ In this point the Commission kept faithfully to what was recommended by the fourth world conference on Faith and Order in Montreal in 1963. See the report of section II, in P.C. Rodger & L. Vischer eds, *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order: Montreal 1963*, Faith and Order Paper No. 42, London, SCM Press, 1964, pp.50-61.

⁵ The main steps were as follows: 1978 Venice colloquium (*Towards a Common Profession of Faith*, Faith and Order Paper No. 100); 1978 Commission meeting in Bangalore; 1979

Klingenthal conference on the filioque (Faith and Order Paper No. 103); 1981 Chambésy consultation; 1981 Odessa consultation; 1982 Lima; 1983 Rome colloquy on the biblical and apostolic roots of the common apostolic faith (Faith and Order Paper No. 119); 1983 Vancouver Assembly (final report, 18-20); 1984 Standing Commission in Crete (Faith and Order Paper No. 121); 1984 Kottayam consultation; 1985 Chantilly consultation; 1985 Kinshasa consultation; 1985 Geneva, working session of steering group; 1985 Crêt Bérard, working session of steering group; 1985 Stavanger Commission meeting; 1986 Standing Commission in Potsdam; 1987 Paris, working session of steering group; 1987 Madrid Standing Commission; 1987 Porto Alegre consultation; 1988 Rhodes consultation; 1988 Boston, working session of steering group; 1988 Pyatigorsk (USSR) consultation; 1989 Rome, working session of steering group; 1989 Würzburg consultation.

⁶ For the Lausanne text "The Church's Common Confession of Faith" (the report of section IV), see Lukas Vischer ed., *A Documentary History of the Faith and Order Movement 1927-1963*, St Louis, Bethany Press, 1963, pp.33-34.

A Practical Example of “Confessing One Faith” from the German Democratic Republic

URSULA RADKE

I should simply like to tell you how it came about this year that in the small country from which I come, the German Democratic Republic, the various different churches made a joint confession of faith. I give my comments the same heading as the churches themselves chose for that event: “First Steps in Hope”. We will approach our topic by asking three questions:

1. What was the starting-point?
2. How did the joint decision take shape?
3. What is ecumenically so important for us about it?

1. What was the starting-point?

It was, of course, not the Faith and Order study “Confessing One Faith” but the call to embark on a conciliar process for “Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation” which set things moving in our churches. Although the World Council of Churches’ Vancouver Assembly had made that call as long ago as 1983, it was another three or four years before the summons really made itself felt among us.

For us the decisive impulse came from a group on the local level. In the memorial service for the destruction of the city of Dresden (1945), the local ecumenical circle called for a GDR-wide assembly for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. The proposal was adopted on the national level by the Council of Christian Churches. A plan emerged that there should be such a “conference” in the years 1988-89; it should discuss the above-mentioned topics at three separate meetings on different dates, and it should remain in the closest possible contact with local congregations. In the end 19 churches and Christian communities took part in its preparation and realization; the Roman Catholic Church

at first had observer status, but from 1 December 1987 participated as a full member. The participating churches and communities were as follows:

- the Protestant regional churches in the GDR (some Lutheran, some Reformed);
- the Moravian Church;
- the Evangelical Methodist Church;
- the Federation of Evangelical Free Church Congregations (Baptists);
- the Federation of the Old Catholic Church in the GDR;
- the Mennonite Church;
- the Roman Catholic Church;
- the Central European Exarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church;
- the Community of Seventh Day Adventists;
- the Religious Society of Friends;
- the Apostolate of Jesus Christ.

The churches and communities appointed the delegates, about 150 in number; it had been envisaged that half would be women, but in fact they formed only 30 percent.

What was the point of an ecumenical assembly in the GDR? The intention was "to achieve at home what we look for from a world ecumenical assembly: to walk the path of peace and make a declaration that unites and commits us and is a testimony to the world of our common mission".

This purpose can only be achieved, however, if congregations, individual Christians and local groups choose this common path as their own. That is why the ecumenical assembly intended from the start to do its work in active mutual relationship with the local level, the local congregations. I myself followed the course of events only from this local level.

2. How did the joint decision take shape?

All congregations received an appeal to participate and first of all to answer two questions: (a) What issues of justice, peace and the integrity of creation should the assembly discuss? (b) What should Christians and churches in the GDR do in these areas?

"First Steps in Hope" — the appeal ran — "Come with us on the path of hope". And in fact many congregations, individual Christians and groups responded to the call. For example, in our part of town some Roman Catholic women came to me and said: "What our churches are

doing now on the highest level, surely we too can undertake ecumenically and try and achieve in the local community.”

Ten thousand communications from the local level were sent in to the ecumenical assembly. These provided one source for deciding the agenda, the other being official declarations of the churches, as for example the 1987 resolution of the synod of the Federation of the Evangelical Churches in the GDR, “Confession of Faith and the Peace Question”.

The ecumenical assembly met for the first time in February 1988 in Dresden. Twelve subject areas took shape and working groups were appointed for each. What problems should be tackled now? A theological basis must be worked out and the following issues addressed:

- life in solidarity: a response to worldwide structures of injustice;
- more justice in the GDR;
- the transition from a system of deterrence to a political system for the maintenance of peace;
- guidance and help in deciding questions of military service and pre-military training;
- aspects of education for peace;
- becoming a peace church;
- changing values/life-styles;
- service of humanity/protection of life;
- ecology and economy;
- energy for the future;
- the value of information for, awareness of, and commitment to, the environment.

These topics are not new! All the churches have already been working on them as a matter of course. But what in fact was *new* was the churches’ determination to deliberate about them jointly and come to conclusions for which they would take joint responsibility. That kind of ecumenical relationship had not existed before. New, too, was the bold attempt to work out a theological basis that would be linked with consequences for practical action.

We took first steps in hope — still cautious at first, and very small steps. Here is a reaction from the congregations at the start of the journey: “At the beginning of the assembly you have testified that you are concerned, and have shown what makes you concerned — you are concerned, for example, about Nicaragua and Mozambique, concerned about the injustice of restrictions imposed in our own country, concerned about the violence done to life and nature. These evidences of your

concern are what matters — not the list of topics, nor the church declarations! Your concern is being discussed, and enables us to express our own concern. God expects us to change our ways — suddenly that becomes crystal clear."

At the second ecumenical assembly in Magdeburg, October 1988, draft texts were available and were worked over and again presented for discussion to the congregations. Individuals and groups prepared to accompany the delegates at the place of assembly, not least with their prayers. It became clear that three subjects were particularly controversial: "more justice in the GDR", "guidance in questions of military service", "service of humanity — protection of life". It is all the more astonishing therefore that, in the end, the ecumenical assembly stressed for example the refusal of military service (conscientious objection) in imitation of Jesus' way of non-violence as a "prophetic sign". Scarcely anyone had thought that possible, especially with such general agreement.

At this point suggested emendations to the draft texts were again received from congregations and groups.

In Dresden, April 1988, the delegates met for the third and last time and by majority vote approved 12 documents, including that giving the theological basis. At a service of worship they formally delivered the papers to the participating churches for adoption and further study. Two messages were addressed to the congregations: a letter to adults and a letter to children! The delegates were trying to make their concern clear to the next generation also — those to whom we are handing on the world in a sorry condition. From both messages we heard the ecumenical assembly profess its commitment to three priorities which it declares to be binding:

- "We profess our priority commitment to establishing justice for all who are the victims of discrimination and oppression.
- "We profess our priority commitment to serving peace by non-violent means.
- "We profess our priority commitment to protecting and promoting life on this earth.

"We have set out the consequences of these three declarations in twelve concluding reports. We hope that these may help us to live more sensitively and to act more responsibly."

I have described the course of the ecumenical assembly in some detail because the way in which participation is made possible is an integral part of the matter.

3. What is ecumenically so important for us about it?

The message of the ecumenical assembly was sent to all the congregations in my church at Pentecost, and it was important for my own Pentecost sermon, too.

“For the first time for centuries”, the message ran, “women and men representing almost all Christian churches in our country have prayed, celebrated, discussed and passed resolutions together. What brought us together was our faith and the threats to God’s creation from injustice, war and a rapacious treatment of nature.” That is the first thing that is so important for us, the fact that the churches in our country are actually responsibly facing the challenges of the world situation together, that they are really concerned about the unparalleled burden of responsibility which has befallen us human beings. In using the term “responsibly”, I take it that their intention is to give conscientious help and guidance for which they are willing to be answerable.

Similarly, the churches have locally and jointly accepted the challenge of the social situation in the GDR. I do not want to go into further detail, but simply to indicate that when human beings see no more hope for their own life among us, and so leave the country, the preaching of hope in any church has to face difficult questions.

This common agreement, consensus, to respond jointly to the global as well as to the local situation on the basis of Christian faith has aroused enthusiasm in the congregations.

“We have tried to think out the challenges of our time on the basis of the gospel. We have come to realize that the biblical call to conversion concerns us afresh today.”

A further important discovery was that the churches had succeeded in arriving at a common interpretation of the situation, namely, at understanding it on the basis of the gospel in the light of the kingdom of God, as a time of conversion, in fact as a turning back to the shalom of God.

In this way they had discovered a theological keyword and come to an understanding based on it. The term “shalom” (whole-ness, sound-ness, well-being) in biblical tradition has such a complex field of reference that it is not only theologically relevant to the domains of “justice”, “peace”, “integrity of the creation”, but actually connects them and can cover all three. And of course integration is precisely the point.

In its rich spectrum of meanings, the word “shalom” has also a further, particularly vital significance for us Germans. It reminds our churches of our common root in God’s history with the people of Israel. We who bear the stigma in the world of the murder of six million Jews had rejected not

only our Jewish fellow human beings but also God's shalom. "Conversion to shalom", as the theological basis puts it, "is for us, therefore, an offer of particular urgency and grace."

It would take too long to present the theological basis in detail, but it is worthy of your attention. Here I shall mention only one more theological point which the churches describe as important for one another, namely the biblical idea of "covenant".

The basis includes the following passage: "In the covenant, God allies himself with his people, and his people accept to be established on the basis of God's justice, peace and creative rule. And so the covenant idea makes it clear that justice, peace and the integrity of the creation are not first of all an ethical obligation of the church, but a reality deriving from the source of its mission, to which the church owes its very existence as church. It does not primarily denote a moral and political endeavour..., but that which most deeply and essentially makes the church the church, even prior to any action on its part. At the same time this shows clearly that by standing up for justice, peace and the integrity of creation, the church is going about its own proper business."

The fact that the different churches could so clearly link theological reflection and practical guidance is felt in the local congregation as something that promotes unity.

Through the ecumenical assembly in its various stages, we experienced (to quote a Catholic theologian who took part in drafting the basis) "a unity in action of still-separated churches". Despite the divisions which still persist, the churches "see the prospect of a community in which the various traditions are no longer a reason for division, but mutually vitalize and enrich one another. All churches are also conscious that they must from now on follow the path to this community together. The biblical idea of the covenant is helpful in shaping this common course. It makes it possible to experience the unity of the church as a concrete witness and a community of service in a plurality of situations and traditions."

In this context the ecumenical assembly represents the commitment of Christians and churches to an ecumenical service on behalf of peace.

Ecumenical relations should thus effectively influence peace policy. To quote the theological basis once again: "Commitment to an ecumenical service of peace is our covenanted decision, in which the three priority options for the poor, for non-violence and for the protection and promotion of life assume shape and form. There unity grows as a concretely unifying commitment."

The Berlin Roman Catholic bishops' conference spoke with appreciation of the ecumenical assembly, thanking all participants for having "sought an answer to questions and problems of our time from the depth of Christian faith and the confidence of Christian hope".

We ourselves will need time to grasp the depth of what has happened and its consequences. The process is continuing in our churches. Although organizational arrangements have been made for this, how it will continue is still an open question.

To me it is beyond question that we have experienced an example of common confession of the faith by the churches, and I was asked to give an instance of that kind from my situation.

I do have difficulties with the question of how this event might be broadened and deepened by the reflection of faith on the lines of this Faith and Order study. To my mind, the question cannot be answered quite so directly. The approaches to theological interpretation for the present day are too diverse. But there are, of course, links. And it is undoubtedly a help if local or "national" ecumenical endeavours can be supported on the worldwide level. The actual joint confession of faith, as it is being accomplished at present among us and elsewhere in the context of the conciliar process can, I believe, serve as an encouragement for the reflection we are engaged in here. On the other hand, it should also be a constant challenge to ensure that the interpretation of the faith for today does not lag behind both contemporary experience and the insights which the churches are already realizing, and for which they are taking responsibility theologically, in deciding already to go forward together. What is going on theologically in the context of the conciliar process should be kept in view by Faith and Order and incorporated into its study process, so that there can be the fruitful mutual interaction for which we are looking.

The ecumenical assembly in the GDR commented in this way on its own experience: "The joint path itself has changed us. A surprising openness to one another has eased the toil of coming to an understanding. A hope has taught us how to take our first steps, and this experience encourages us not to stand still now. We have accepted the new experience of community as a precious gift of God. The ecumenical momentum of our assembly is not to be reversed. We have talked with many tongues, but finally spoken one language. There must not be a return to our positions behind old walls and in the old tensions."

I can only express the wish that in our consultations here, too, hope will teach us the way.

The Apostolic Faith Study: a Response from an Asian Context

LORNA KHOO

A Concrete approach

How can this study help churches in specific situations to express their already-existing fellowship through common witness to their faith?

This is the fundamental question, but before it can be adequately answered there are two preliminary questions which must be dealt with. First, what is the specific situation in the geographical area in question? This includes the following issues: (1) What exactly is the location? (2) What churches are there, and what is the denominational breakdown in terms of percentages? (3) What is the use of the Nicene Creed by the major churches there? Do they use it: frequently/weekly; occasionally/once in a while; rarely/"once in a blue moon"; never. (4) What are the theological challenges faced by the churches?

A second preliminary question is, what is the role of the Nicene Creed, and this study, in this situation? This must be carefully explored. In certain areas the role can be a major one — especially in the field of affirming, promoting and witnessing to Christian unity. In other areas, the place of the creed (and of this study) may require that it plays a different (and perhaps a lesser) role.

The situation in South East Asia

I would like to focus on one specific situation to illustrate this point, namely Southeast Asia, including the countries of Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and Burma. For each country the following represent the key churches and the use of the creed. (These are general estimates, as no official study has been made and official statistics are not available for most countries.)

CHURCH	MEMBERSHIP	USE OF CREED
<i>Singapore</i>		
Roman Catholic ¹	111,842	Frequent
Methodist ²	19,775	Occasional
Independent	14,661	Never
Assembly of God	13,490	Never
Anglican	12,954	Frequent
Presbyterian	8,931	Rare
<i>Malaysia</i> ³		
Roman Catholic	52%	Frequent
Methodist	12%	Occasional
Anglican	12%	Frequent
Independents (includes Assembly of God)	8%	Never
<i>Philippines</i> ⁴		
Roman Catholic	85%	Frequent
Philippine Independent Church	3%	Frequent
United Methodist Church	—	Occasional
United Church of Christ in the Philippines	—	Rare
<i>Thailand</i> ⁵		
Roman Catholic	189,000	Frequent
Church of Christ in Thailand (90% of Protestants)	30,900	Rare
<i>Burma</i> ⁶		
Burma Baptist Convention	372,250	Never
Roman Catholic	not known	Frequent
Church of the Province of Burma	45,000	Frequent
<i>Indonesia</i> ⁷		
Indonesian Council of Churches (ICC):		
majority from Calvinist and Reformed tradi-		
tion; there are some Lutherans, Methodists		
and Pentecostals		
	52%	Occasional
Roman Catholic	25%	Frequent
Churches outside ICC (conservative types)	20%	Never

The creed in the Southeast Asian context

With regard to the place of the Nicene Creed (and this study): other than the Roman Catholics, Anglicans and Lutherans who use the Creed

regularly, and the English-speaking Methodists who use it occasionally (other language groups would be less inclined to use the Nicene Creed), most churches do not use it. The Apostles' Creed is more widely accepted and utilized. A large segment of churches (and those who use the Creed only occasionally can be put in this category as well) are not familiar with the Nicene Creed. The introduction of the Creed — even as an “instrument to help churches focus and reflect on the apostolic faith” — might be alienating to them because the use of it is foreign to their particular church tradition (which might be more “evangelical”, “low church” or “charismatic”). Their question to us is: “Are you trying to make us Roman Catholics?”

The use of the Nicene Creed and the invitation to participate in a study based on the Creed sounds (to them) like an agenda from the West, simply because their immediate agenda and priorities are different. They say, for example: “We are so busy trying to evangelize on the front lines of the ‘battlefield’. We have no time for intellectual and theological exercises which belong to a different era and a different “pace” of mission. Only ‘settled’ Christians in the West can afford the time and energy for such ventures.”

It is true that most of these churches do share the main content of the Creed “in spirit” though not in form... but the use of the Creed itself is a stumbling block. And this Faith and Order study on the apostolic faith does not fare any better, since it is based on the Creed.

What unites Christians in this part of the world is more likely to be practical issues which require their working together to find solutions to such problems as these: the challenges posed by the issues of Christ and culture; encounters with other religions and the revival of these religions; the actions and attitudes of totalitarian governments; clampdowns on evangelization and social witness of the church by the state for reasons of “peace, stability and security”; and theological divisions (into “charismatic”, “evangelical”, “radical”, “fundamentalist” camps) which often split the churches more than denominational differences.

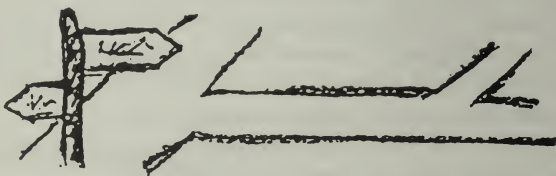
With all this in mind we want to ask, what good is the study of the Nicene Creed to Southeast Asian churches? What is the relevance of the Creed and this study? We will answer these questions in relation to two groups of churches.

The first is the “Western” churches (so called because of their cultural roots) and the churches in Southeast Asia “trained” to use the Creed regularly. For such churches the Creed, and the study, can be linked to a historical storehouse located at the intersection of several roads.



It can be a place where Christians have met and can continue to meet to enrich each other with the unique resources (of their different denominations) and with the riches in the storehouse itself. Meeting at the intersection, in the storehouse, Christians affirm, confess, renew their fellowship with one another. With the resources from each other and from the storehouse, they can face the challenges ahead of them, regardless of the road they choose to take from that intersection. In this respect the Creed, and this study, have a major unifying role (including promotion, affirmation, witnessing to and from Christian unity) to play in the life of the church.

The second group is the Southeast Asian churches (with their own local cultural roots) and churches not familiar with the Creed. For them, the Creed and this study can be road signs, serving both as a warning sign and a directional sign at an intersection.



The sign warns against possible wrong paths (heresies), against the waste of time (when one ignores the sign and gets lost), against the refusal to learn from the wisdom of the past. They are signposts for the churches on the move, churches which are searching for their own answers to their own questions. The questions are posed by the new context where they find themselves, a context far from that which was the cradle of the Creed. The signposts assist in the "unity" of these churches by directing

the churches to certain roads where they may meet fellow Christians from other churches. They would recognize each other by the fact that they are travelling on the same roads, guided by the same signs. The role of the Creed and this study would thus be to act as a resource, a reference and directional pointer. The riches to be had are not buried under the signposts; they are yet to be found as the travellers discover and encounter them on the paths which they are walking with the help of their compass (the Bible) and their travelling baggage (their cultural inheritance).

Some concrete proposals

But now we must come back to our original question: "How can this study help churches in specific situations express their already existing fellowship through common witness to their faith?" Let us continue to use the images of the storehouse and the road sign.

1. The Creed and this study as a storehouse at the intersection of several roads

For the mainline churches which accept and use the Nicene Creed, the primary place of this study would be in the theological seminaries. Courses using this study (or a modified version of it) would help students appreciate their heritage and recognize their kinship with other Christians who confess the same faith.

Joint studies, involving seminaries of several mainline denominations, would bring together students from various traditions. Such joint "studies on the study" would facilitate contacts and interaction between future denominational leaders, promote goodwill between them and (perhaps) encourage co-operation in practical ecumenical ventures in years to come. They would also help the students (future leaders of their churches) to learn from each other's traditions, thus enriching their own. These gatherings would spur students to learn more about their own denominational heritage, so that they can contribute to the general discussion of the study.

If the study can be adapted so that it can be used by pastors for their pulpit ministry, a series of sermon topics could be planned for all churches (for example, during Lent), so that congregations (regardless of their denominational background) will hear the same topics expounded on the same Sundays. Identical sermon outlines or notes could be distributed after the services. This would underline for the members of the congregation the unity of the different traditions.

The form of the Nicene Creed found in the study needs to be "owned" by the churches which use the Creed. The agreed form could then be

confessed by all in order to emphasize the unity of the churches. Translations of this form should be made in languages of the people and made available to all.

2. *The Creed and this study as a directional and warning sign*

For churches not accustomed to the Creed, the study can be used as a resource for the writing of Bible study guides and educational material for local congregations. These materials have to take a case-study approach (that is, they point to the local problems or challenges and to possible answers suggested by the study). Materials can be audiovisual (e.g. slides, soundtracks, video presentations, meditative use of Asian Christian artforms and music, etc.). Since the obvious use of the Nicene Creed is downplayed in these materials, it would be easier for churches which are unfamiliar with the Creed to use them, thus allowing the study to play the role of a "directional and warning sign".

A regional body should be set up to work out how the details of this study can be "translated" into usable materials for churches unfamiliar with the Creed. This body would include a few facilitators from Faith and Order, representatives from the laity (but not theologically educated persons) and the clergy (not professional theologians but pastors), a few theological students and lecturers, and representatives from both churches which use the Creed and those which do not.

Some members of this body should be appointed by the local church leaders. Others should be invited by the facilitators after consultation with local "grapevines", to ensure that the team which is gathered will be effective in reaching out to as many persons of the region as possible. Links with Christian writers and book sellers would help in having the materials printed and thus accessible to all Christians.

NOTES

¹ *Official Church Directory and Ordo* (1988), published by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei.

² Singapore Church Directory, compiled by the Singapore Every Home Crusade (1988-89).

³ Information from staff of the Council of Churches, Malaysia.

⁴ Information from a UMC pastor from the Philippines.

⁵ *Handbook of Member Churches*, Geneva, WCC, rev. ed. 1985.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Figures from *The Growing Seed*, F. Cooley, ed.

Group Discussion and Plenary Action

Process of Reflection

For this stage of their work commissioners joined groups dealing either with the programme on apostolic faith or that on unity and renewal. Those working on apostolic faith focused upon the programme text "Confessing One Faith: Towards an Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as Expressed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381): Study Document" with groups working on parts I, II or III of this document (on the first, second and third articles of the Nicene Creed, respectively). Another group worked towards an "introduction" which would explain the rationale and goals of the text and thus the programme as a whole.

Each group produced a report which was presented and discussed in plenary (time did not permit some groups to review the account of their discussion before its presentation in plenary). The reports were then voted upon by plenary in a single action, as indicated below.

The reports dealing with parts I, II and III made detailed theological and editorial suggestions for the revision of the respective portions of the text; as explained in the editor's introduction, these group reports have been transmitted to the apostolic faith steering group but are not included here.

Group Report. Apostolic Faith: Introduction

I. Reasons for choosing the Nicene Creed as focus

1. The group adopted the suggestion that the introduction should

emphasize more strongly the reasons for choosing the Nicene Creed as focus of explicating the apostolic faith. The Nicene Creed:

- a) is an authentic expression of the essential content of the apostolic faith;
- b) is part of the historical heritage of all contemporary churches;
- c) has been more universally received than any other symbol of the faith;
- d) has been in liturgical use through the centuries to express the one faith of the universal church;
- e) hence the Nicene Creed functions as an indicator of whether the faith as expressed in modern situations is the same faith as the one professed by the church through the centuries.

II. Apostolic tradition and the role of creeds

2. Creeds occur within the ongoing process of the apostolic tradition in summarizing and focusing its essential content. They were developed in close connection with baptism, but also more widely used. In baptism, the baptized person can be asked to give an individual statement of faith according to the Trinitarian structure of the faith of the community (*regula fidei*) and in need of recognition by it — as it occurs in some of the Free churches even today — or baptismal confession may use a wording already authorized by the church. In any case, baptismal confession joins the faith of the individual to the common faith of the church. To express that faith is also the function of creeds in the eucharistic liturgy. In the case of the Nicene Creed, a conciliar creed by its wide reception became the ecumenical symbol of the unity of faith of the universal church. Therefore, its importance was emphasized by Faith and Order as early as Lausanne 1927; the common Christian faith “is proclaimed in the holy scriptures and is witnessed to and safeguarded in the ecumenical creed, commonly called the Nicene, and in the Apostles’ Creed, which faith is continuously confirmed in the spiritual experience of the church of Christ”.¹ The so-called Apostles’ Creed, however, that originated from Rome, has been received and used only in the Christian West, while the Nicene Creed unites all parts of the Christian church.

III. Dangers in formalized use of confessional statements and how to avoid them in the aim of this study

3. The use of credal formulas involves dangers of degenerating into formalism and thus becoming inauthentic. The non-credal churches have been particularly sensitive to these dangers. Credal formulas were also

misused, when their acceptance was imposed upon persons with legal force, violating their conscience. Acceptance and use of a credal formula by the non-credal churches in their regular worship is not being proposed in this study. But in assuming that these churches share the apostolic faith expressed in the Nicene Creed, it is hoped that on special occasions representatives of those churches can join in the profession of the Nicene Creed as a testimony to the unity of the apostolic faith of the one catholic church.

IV. The common explication of the Nicene Creed as an instrument of promoting mutual trust

4. The introduction should emphasize that the study is aimed at strengthening the mutual trust among the churches concerning their participation in the fullness of the apostolic faith. Such trust is required in order to render a future conciliar fellowship possible, so that in opening a council the representatives of the churches can profess together the creed of the church. To do this on behalf of their churches is more than doing it individually, as happens even now in ecumenical gatherings. It requires the trust that all participants, and the churches they represent, in professing the Creed give expression to the same faith. To nourish such trust, so that all the churches may more clearly recognize the one apostolic faith in each other, is the purpose of the common explication of the Nicene Creed. It need not reach complete identity of interpretation but rather a sufficient degree of unanimity, sufficient for the mutual recognition of the sameness of the faith, while allowing for a measure of difference regarding the mode of interpretation and appropriation of the language of the Nicene Creed.

V. Additional points

5. The introduction should refer to the historical context of the Nicene Creed and its distance from modernity, and also to the fact that its significance transcends the limitations of its historical setting. It should state the reasons and method followed in complementing the assertions of the Nicene Creed in the process of explicating them. It should focus the use of the terms "recognition" and "confession" on the Nicene Creed as reference point. It should spell out the methodological role in identifying the "challenges" arising in the modern world concerning the wording of the Creed.

VI. Future programme

6. Between Budapest and the Standing Commission meeting in August 1990, the text of the explication will be revised in the light of reactions from within the churches and suggestions from Commission members. To this purpose the steering group will meet twice, in January and possibly in April, in order to evaluate and incorporate suggestions as made at Budapest and to rewrite the introduction. Advisers may be asked to contribute to that task. The revised text will be sent to all Commission members. They will be invited not to make general comments, but to offer "modes", i.e. alternative proposals of detailed formulation in specific places, to be received in time for the Standing Commission in August 1990.

7. The Standing Commission 1990 will be asked to authorize publication of the revised text as a study document and to transmit it to the Central or Executive Committee at or after the Canberra Assembly.

8. The new Standing Commission and the world conference on Faith and Order in 1993 might be asked to receive the study document and consider passing it to the churches with an appropriate request, which might be: Can you recognize in this explication the common apostolic faith to such a degree that you could, in an ecumenical context, profess that faith in proclaiming the Nicene Creed together with those who also recognize their apostolic faith in this explication?

9. In 1991 a study guide (possibly including a short version) should be written explaining the main content and purpose of the study.

NOTE

¹ Lukas Vischer ed., *A Documentary History of the Faith and Order Movement 1927-1963*, St Louis, Bethany Press, 1963, p.33.

Plenary Discussion and Action

The reports of the four working groups were presented by Turid Seim ("One God", dealing with the first article of the creed), Paul Tarazi ("Christ", the second article), Geoffrey Wainwright ("The Holy Spirit", the third article), and Mary Tanner ("Introduction", on the purpose and goal of the study). The four reports were then

considered together in plenary, with 17 persons taking part in the discussion.

In addressing the report on "introductory" issues speakers affirmed the "tentative formulation to be put to the churches", echoing the hope that this explication could be the basis for their common profession of the apostolic faith, as expressed in the Nicene Creed, in an ecumenical context.

The explanation for choosing the Nicene Creed should, it was said, be complemented by a statement on the emergence of the Creed from its roots in the biblical confession of Christ, through the early baptismal affirmations, and thence into a confession "used doxologically and eucharistically". The methodology of the study should be carefully explained, along with the various "contexts" (biblical, "Nicean", and contemporary) in which credal formulations have developed and are used. The "truth" of credal statements was, it was suggested, ultimately more important in ecumenical discussion than historical considerations.

Several speakers focused on the role of creeds in the churches and ecumenical discussion. The text should avoid "an attenuated understanding of apostolicity" which limited it to "obedience to apostolic authority": there are other and broader understandings of apostolicity, and any one expression of the apostolic faith was limited. It was explained that the historical "aversion" of some churches to creeds "was not against the creeds of the undivided church", but was a reaction, in particular historical circumstances, against the divisive use of "denominational affirmations". Within some "non-credal" churches "the Nicene faith is affirmed and the creed used in teaching"; yet such churches might consider the present assurances "that the use of a credal formula is not being proposed" to be too timid.

The relationship was explored between confessing the faith through the historic creeds, and the "confessions" through which (particularly the Reformed) churches have continually "re-stated" the historic faith in the face of contemporary experiences and challenges. It should be shown how the confession of faith in the Nicene Creed "supports and encourages specific acts of confession" today, how it helps to root specific acts of confession today "in the confession of the ages".

The Commission was called to "an ecumenism which is not only in space but also in time" and was reminded that, in the course of

church history, some "divisions" had proved necessary for the defence of particular truths, while other divisive movements (such as gnosticism) had not been "truthful".

Turning to the reports on the three articles of the Creed, it was emphasized that the discussion of atheism should distinguish between "a dogmatic rejection of God in principle" and a response to an "oppressive" idea of God; in the latter sense, atheism might represent a "challenge to believers to purify their belief in God".

There was extended discussion of the issue of language. Several speakers disputed the statement that "all language about God is analogical and symbolic". From a patristic perspective, it was noted, many misunderstandings could be avoided by considering the intentions of the Nicene "fathers". The Arians having "exploited and misused" the idea of God as "Father", Athanasius refused to use biological fatherhood as a basis for speaking analogically about God and it is risky, it was said, on both theological and psychological grounds to explain God's "fatherhood" by reference to biological fathers and children.

Some urged a treatment of both positive and negative "images of Mary" in relation to the role of women in the church, and a review of the reference to "theotokos". The issue of Mary's virginity in scripture and creed needs to be dealt with, though more appropriately in the commentary on the apostolic faith document than in the text itself.

The Commission was urged not to confuse the local and the universal dimensions of the church. The universal church is not merely the "sum" of the local churches, but it should not be implied that the universal dimension of the church was somehow "more" than the local, nor should the universal be set "over against" its geographical and cultural variety. The language of *Lumen Gentium* was commended; this referred to the universal church as a communion of "particular churches", meaning both dioceses and traditions. "Catholicity" was commended as "the main ecumenical understanding of the church"; this means that no local church can, without the agreement of the others, take decisions in contradiction to them, and that a local church cannot, on its own, accept any article of faith which is in contradiction to any other part of the body of Christ. For one speaker, two illustrations of the breaking of such an understanding of catholicity were the adoption into the creed of the phrase *et filioque* and the practice of the ordination of women.

The reports were then voted upon in a single action, as steering group moderator Jean Tillard put the following to the Commission:

I move that the report of the apostolic faith study be received by the Plenary Commission and referred, together with the record of the plenary discussion and the notes of the working groups, to the Standing Commission and the steering group for use in carrying out the future programme of the study as recommended here.

This was carried unanimously, without abstentions.

The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community: a Perspective from Budapest

PAUL A. CROW, JR

When in 1982 at Lima the Commission on Faith and Order authorized, without much fanfare, the study on "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community" the mood was one of calculated celebration mingled with anxiety. The sense of celebration came from the realization that Faith and Order was again confronting a recurring theme on its agenda, a theme that had appeared several times before — as studies by John Deschner, Thomas Best and Gennadios Limouris acknowledge — but as yet without fruition.

From the first world conference on Faith and Order at Lausanne in 1927 up to 1968, the concentration was upon the historical and doctrinal issues that have divided the churches. Strikingly, these efforts had already revealed the need for the church's openness to the world. Many leaders had seen the interpenetration of the Faith and Order and the Life and Work movements, and their instinct had led to the uniting of these two movements at the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Amsterdam (1948) under the renewal theme "Man's Disorder and God's Design".

Another stage was inaugurated in 1968 at the Uppsala Assembly, where the churches' encounter with a radically changing world situation led them to confess: "The church is bold in speaking of itself as the sign of the coming unity of [hu]mankind."¹ Seeking to pursue this theological insight, Faith and Order launched a study from 1968 to 1978 on "The Unity of the Church and the Unity of Humankind" that set the search for visible church unity in various secular contexts. The productivity of this project can be seen in three developments. First, the Faith and Order Commission at Louvain in 1971 focused on five concrete sub-themes — the struggle for human justice, the encounter with other living faiths, the

struggle against racism, the alienation of the handicapped in society, and differences in cultures. While this meeting was not without frustrations, it did begin to raise new questions and offer new insights about the relevance of unity and disunity in society to the issue of the unity of the church. Clearly articulated at Louvain was the call for an "intercontextual method". Second, another result of this stage was the publication of a unique volume of essays entitled *Unity in Today's World* (1978), exploring many of the issues that had surfaced at Louvain. Third and finally, the energies of this period produced at the Accra (1974) meeting of the Commission an important theological statement, "Towards Unity in Tension", that claimed:

Christians have a mandate for critical, loyal participation in humanity's strivings for a more adequate human community... The church is called to be a visible sign of the presence of Christ, who is both hidden and revealed to faith, reconciling and healing human alienation in the worshipping community.²

These activities form the prehistory to the current study on "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community". But the reason for celebration when it was launched at Lima lay in the recognition that all that had haltingly gone before, all that had happened in the past seven years of consultations, publications, and dialogue, and all that would come in the future around this theme, is living out a fundamental function of Faith and Order as written in its by-laws: "to study such questions of faith, order, and worship as bear on this task [to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship] and to examine such social, cultural, political, racial, and other factors as affect the unity of the church".³ Unity and renewal are woven into the fabric of Faith and Order.

In addition to celebration, Lima also recorded no little anxiety over this study. Many did not yet see the complementary relationship of unity and renewal with baptism, eucharist and ministry and the apostolic faith processes. More fundamentally, it was anticipated that this study would have to draw together two distinct, possibly irreconcilable, approaches to ecumenism. Already at Lima, José Miguez Bonino sharply contrasted these two visions and strategies. One, he noted, arises from the Western churches and is preoccupied with the ecclesiological as well as the social-political assumptions of affluent churches and societies; the other approach identifies with the ecclesiological implications of justice and peace and the struggles of the poor and the marginalized. Speaking for

Latin Americans, Miguez Bonino said this "conflictive oikoumene" can be resolved only as the churches engage in the struggle for "a true ecumenism" that is expressed in the struggle for "a true oikoumene (for a human habitation for the whole human family)" and, equally, the struggle for a church that embraces the whole Christian family.⁴ This polarity was honestly acknowledged and lamented at the Vancouver Assembly in 1983 as a tension, not only in the WCC but also its member churches, between those who are primarily committed to the unity of the church and those who are committed to the desperate need for justice, peace, and reconciliation in the human community:

For some, the search for a unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship seems, at best secondary, at worst irrelevant to the struggles for peace, justice and human dignity; for others the church's political involvement against the evils of history seems, at best secondary, at worst detrimental to its role as eucharistic community and witness to the gospel.⁵

Vancouver, however, pronounced this dichotomy to be an ecumenical heresy: "As Christians we want to affirm there can be no such division between unity and human renewal, either in the church or in the agenda of the WCC." Indeed, baptism, eucharist and ministry are "healing and uniting signs of a church living and working for a renewed and reconciled humankind";⁶ and racism, classism and sexism call for a common struggle since "no one form of renewal will, by itself, accomplish a renewal of ecclesial community".⁷

Reflecting on our journey since Lima and on the dynamics of the unity and renewal process, I am bold to say that the polarity between unity and justice, between mission and unity, has been greatly lessened. We come to Budapest with a new confidence in the complementarity of the unity of the church and the renewal of human community. We have learned that it is quite inappropriate to set up conflictive concepts of ecumenism which falsely divide the issues and participants between theologians and social activists, between first and third worlds, between "unity enthusiasts" and "renewal enthusiasts". A symbolic moment capturing this judgment came in the report of our general secretary, Emilio Castro, to the recent meeting of the Central Committee at Moscow, when he declared: "Just as unity is essential to the struggle for justice in the light of God's promise of reconciliation in Jesus Christ, so the proclamation of justice and an attitude of service on our part are a testimony to the common faith in Jesus Christ which has brought us together in the ecumenical family."⁸

I believe that this new confidence which we bring to Budapest has grown from several developments within Faith and Order and among the churches.

First, defining the unity and renewal process as an exploration in ecclesiology has placed it at the heart of the ecumenical task. We are not just about "social analysis" but are striving for an authentic relationship between the church's faith and mission, between the gospel and the church's essential presence in the world as sign and foretaste of the liberating and reconciling power of God.

Second, the study's aim and methodology has also embraced a commitment to the ecumenical learnings from local experiences and different contexts. Many are convinced that unless there is a methodology which uses and values experience as a valid way of reflecting theologically the study would be deeply flawed. Positively this methodology brings forth the faith experiences of the whole people of God, representing diverse cultures and contexts, women and men, those from many theological perspectives. As we have listened to these local witnesses we have come to realize that some of the deepest theological issues and ecclesiological affirmations come to light in the encounters between God and God's people in concrete experiences.⁹ This resource can bring us closer to a vision of human wholeness, a vision rooted in the Christian Tradition and contemporary life where we believe the Holy Spirit is at work.

Third, in the years since Lima the churches have experienced, in their own lives and situations, the brokenness of the human community. Their assemblies and missionary statements affirm more and more that the churches are divided not only by the traditional theological issues of the past centuries but often, and more tragically, by the alienations between races, classes, ethnic groups, women and men. The churches in the USA and other places have come to speak of these realities as "new church-dividing issues". This is revealed when priests and lay people confess that transubstantiation or differing modes of baptism are replaced as the most divisive, controversial issues by the ordination of women, inclusive language, abortion, and differing visions of the meaning of justice and how it can be realized. The observation by Jürgen Moltman in 1977 has become a late twentieth-century truism: in contrast to an early ecumenical era, "theology unites, praxis divides".¹⁰ These new signs of brokenness have begun to raise theological and ecclesiological issues, all of which have dramatic implications for the visible unity of the church.

Glimpses of the vision and goal of unity

This study offers mature, though not final, reflections about the nature of the church and its unity as well as about the church's witness, mission and service to the world. Perhaps its most original feature is its sustained effort to articulate ecclesiology with sensitivity to the church's unity as lived out in the midst of a divided world. Along this line the report offers a few glimpses of the unity we seek, glimpses which go beyond the concepts of unity already operative in the World Council of Churches, namely those expressed in the New Delhi statement on unity (1961) and the Nairobi statement on conciliar fellowship (1975).

First, reflections on unity and renewal require us to think of unity as incorporating far more diversity than most models have normally envisioned. As the history of the church shows, diversity is a normative part of the church's development, and its theological task from generation to generation is to discover and to define the limits of diversity. In these days of heightened celebration of the diversity, the nearly incredible diversity, among and within the churches, and the importance of the ethnic, cultural and liturgical gifts which mark the church's life, the ecumenical movement reminds the churches of the differences between diversity and division, and challenges the churches to see their diversities as gifts of the one body to be celebrated in communion. Diversity need not be conflictive, and in the biblical perspective it is given by God for "upbuilding the whole body". Unity and renewal presses for a diversity of forms, particularly in theology and liturgy and possibly in ministry, while maintaining the visible unity to which all our diversities should witness.

Second, the drama of conflict among nations and peoples today leads us to propose a new mark or characteristic of the church's unity, namely shared suffering. As chapter IV of the unity and renewal report says: "Injustice breaks the fundamental relationship of communion with God and neighbour for which humankind was created."¹¹ If the unity God has given to the church is a sign of the divine purpose for all humankind, then this unity implies a costly readiness to stand with those who suffer injustice, who are poor, who are marginalized and powerless. Such identification with God's suffering ones does not mean that the unity of the church is merely functional. Just the opposite: it expresses the church's nature as the community of Jesus Christ, the suffering servant. Unity as shared suffering, observed the fifth consultation of united and uniting churches (1987) at Potsdam, is "a direct reflection of God's own unity and unitive love. Relating unity to mission, service, and sharing the

sufferings of humankind is precisely an expression of the love of God which calls the church into being as the sign, foretaste and instrument of a new humanity in the kingdom of God.”¹²

My deep conviction about this expression of unity leads me, on behalf of the unity and renewal steering group, to make a proposal. As the WCC moves towards the Seventh Assembly at Canberra (1991), its Central Committee has called for “a fresh consideration of the concepts and forms of the ‘unity we seek’ in the ecumenical movement”.¹³ Assuming a future statement will be drafted — one expressing a vision and its marks consistent with those adopted at New Delhi and Nairobi — it should by all means include a mark or requirement of visible unity which calls the churches to deliberate and compassionate sharing with those Christians who suffer all forms of brokenness and rejection. Such a commitment is required to express fully the communion we name as “visible unity” or “conciliar fellowship”.

Third, the church’s witness and unity is eschatological. It can neither be fulfilled by human idealism nor denied completely by human sin. There will always be sharp differences of theology or strategies for justice; Christians and ecumenical organizations will always fall short of the glory of God and take sinful, divisive actions against each other and against other persons outside the church. “In that sense church unity cannot wait for perfection of knowledge, faith and love; it will always be a unity in hope.”¹⁴ It is the good news that kindles and sustains this hope. It is the gospel that gives the church confidence to strive to become a sign of the eschatological hope, and by the breaking down of barriers to allow the whole human race to live in peace. For those who yearn for the visible unity of the church and those who struggle for justice, there is “a sure and certain hope that in the end God will overcome and God’s kingdom [will] be established... Then, and then only, will the unity of the church and the renewal of human community be visible in their fullness and their concreteness.”¹⁵ So in the ecumenical movement we do not labour in vain. God will use our limited and incomplete efforts for God’s prevenient witness to reconciliation and wholeness.

Exegetical clues to the report

I shall not at this point review the whole text — since all Faith and Order participants are known to read all the documents before they arrive! (I remember the counsel of my PhD professor, Robert S. Paul, then a former staff member of the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, as I left for the Montreal world conference on Faith and Order: “Remember that those

who have read and know the documents will at an ecumenical conference have the most influence in the debate and will shape the final reports.”)

I want only to offer a few exegetical clues as we try to understand this first full draft of the unity and renewal report. It does not have the same character as BEM, a text whose every line embodies a theological convergence. It is an integrative text rather than a consensus text. It seeks to hold together — within a process of covenantal life and witness — the plurality of concepts and commitments within today’s ecumenical movement, particularly within the World Council of Churches. This document seeks to be holistic, projecting a common direction while acknowledging the incompleteness of our understanding of, and commitments to, unity and renewal. Its holistic character offers the reader much freedom as to the point of entrance. You and those who will study it later in local situations may enter through chapters I, II, III, IV or V; but what is critical is to read *all* chapters with a sense of their inter-relatedness. Chapters IV and V must always be linked with chapters II and III.

The following points, which are the heart of the content of the report, also open to us the reality and the spiritual power of unity and renewal.

In the first place, the unity and renewal both of the church and the human community are placed in the perspective of the kingdom of God (chapter II). The kingdom is announced in the prophetic and apostolic message of the Bible, and is established by God’s judgment and justice. A restored community comes into being whose life is peace, justice, joy and harmony. This reign of God is eternal and universal.

The kingdom teaches us about the church. Those who receive Jesus’ message of the kingdom, and who are led to affirm it in faith and to accept baptism, belong to Christ’s church. The church is therefore a community whose life and mission are oriented towards the coming of the kingdom, and in the celebration of the Lord’s supper the church anticipates the blessings and finality that God shall bring into the lives of persons and the community. As that part of humanity that affirms the liberating power of God for all people, the church is called to live among all men and women and among all creation as a witness to the justice and freedom of the kingdom. The church also “participates in the paradoxes and dynamics of the kingdom in history”.¹⁶ Since the church is not the kingdom, its missionary witness and its historical forms are penultimate. This means that the church can be faithful to its Lord and still be open to criticism, repentance, and renewal. When the church fails to distinguish itself from God’s kingdom, it is tempted by an unwarranted triumphalism about its

structures, decisions and achievements. History proves that on such occasions the institutional church has participated in and perpetuated all sorts of injustices; yet through its witness to the kingdom a fallible, empirical community is able to make available the liberating fruits of God's promises.

Secondly, in trying to describe the role of the church in God's design and work for the salvation of humanity, the unity and renewal report uses the images of "mystery" (*mysterion*) and "prophetic sign" (*semeia*). Our process so far reveals how difficult it is to hold these two images together in any ecclesiology; "We have not even found a common terminology", observes Bishop John Austin Baker, "to speak with one voice about this paradoxical character of the church, in which faith and existential experience seem to be in sharp conflict."¹⁷ Nevertheless these two images are serving well our understanding of unity and renewal. "Mystery" indicates that the church, despite its frailty, is a reality that transcends human comprehension. It links this community with "God's primal intention to accomplish the salvation of all humanity through Jesus Christ".¹⁸ The phrase "prophetic sign" indicates the essential relation between the church and the world. "Called by God out of the world the church is placed in the world's service; it is destined to be God's sign for the world by proclaiming the gospel and living a life of loving service to humanity... Thus the church is called constantly to look both to its Lord, to whom it owes all, and to humanity to which it is fully committed."¹⁹ Again the message comes through clearly: the church becomes God's sign by its costly involvement in the brokenness and sufferings of the world, all for the sake of, and by the power of, the self-emptying Christ.

Thirdly, the unity and renewal process, as you can tell from the chronological chart of our consultations which is appended to my paper, has tested the possibility and implications of unity and reconciliation by focusing both on the search for justice (chapter IV of the report) and the search for the community of women and men in the church and society (chapter V of the report). These choices were informed by two factors: they offered Faith and Order the possibility of co-operating with other partners in the World Council of Churches; and they offered us two of the most tense and controversial alienations in both church and society (the Standing Committee's judgments in 1984 at Crete have proved to be more timely than we imagined).²⁰ The lessons, as the report begins to show, are legion. Perhaps better than any others we could have chosen, these two issues and struggles are

“prisms”, as Mary Tanner observed at Vancouver, through which we are able to view and confess the reality of division within the church, and to claim God’s call to be a sign and foretaste of God’s unity and renewal in the human community.²¹ Any serious attempts to lay bare, and to effect reconciliation in, these areas of brokenness will draw us immediately and inevitably into such tense and difficult issues as the implications of genuine solidarity with the poor, the ministry of women in the church, inclusive language, and others. Faith and Order has hardly found the will or the methodology to confront these possibly church-dividing issues, but any delay here will only weaken and distort our efforts for unity and our hopes for renewal.

My final task is to offer a procedural footnote on the responsibility of the Plenary Commission here at Budapest. Our goals are threefold in relation to the study on unity and renewal: (1) to have a full discussion of the report, a discussion which reflects everyone’s views and perspectives, and explores its strengths and its limitations thoroughly; (2) to have the Plenary Commission receive the text — in light of revisions to be charted here — and to commend it to the churches for study and response; and (3) to secure your advice and counsel in identifying the future dynamics and steps in the unity and renewal process.

A few questions can start the discussion. How does the report speak to your experience and hopes for unity of the church and the renewal of human community? To whom in the churches should the report be sent? What questions will draw the churches into the full implications and intensity of the calling to unity and renewal? How does unity and renewal relate to the BEM and the apostolic faith processes? You will identify other questions. But your active and responsible involvement in the discussion groups is strategic for the next steps.

A decade ago our moderator, John Deschner, whose wisdom has analyzed and guided this study every step of the way, spoke of the unity and renewal study as “a turning point in the history of the Faith and Order movement”. Surely our experience from Lima to Budapest has proved that it is one of the most emotionally-charged but also most promising processes in Faith and Order and the whole WCC. This report is provisional but its implications are writ large. The revised version of this report will impact Faith and Order’s witness at the Canberra Assembly and the world conference on Faith and Order in 1993. We have much more to do, but some initial, small fruits of the Spirit have already been given, helping the church to be a sign of God’s judgment and hope for a terribly divided world.

NOTES

- ¹ *The Uppsala Report 1968*, Norman Goodall ed., Geneva, WCC, 1968, p.17.
- ² *Uniting in Hope: Accra 1974*, Faith and Order Paper No. 72, Geneva, WCC, 1975, pp.90-94; see pp.91 and 93.
- ³ By-laws of the Faith and Order Commission, 2(a) see p.301.
- ⁴ See José Miguez Bonino, "A 'Third World' Perspective on the Ecumenical Movement", in *Towards Visible Unity*, Michael Kinnamon ed., Vol. I, Faith and Order Paper No. 112, Geneva, WCC, 1982, pp.58-67; esp. p.64.
- ⁵ *Gathered for Life*, David Gill ed., Geneva, WCC, 1983, p.49.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p.50.
- ⁸ Document 4.5, WCC Central Committee meeting, Moscow, USSR, 16-27 July 1989. Published in *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 41, No. 4, October 1989, p.612.
- ⁹ Cf. Paul A. Crow, Jr, "Unity and Renewal: Introductory Reflections", in *Faith and Renewal. Reports and Documents of the Commission on Faith and Order: Stavanger 1985*, Thomas F. Best ed., Faith and Order Paper No. 131, Geneva, WCC, 1986, p.166.
- ¹⁰ Jürgen Moltmann, "What Kind of Unity? The Dialogue Between the Traditions of East and West", in *Lausanne 1977: Fifty Years of Faith and Order*, Faith and Order Paper No. 82, Geneva, WCC, 1977, p.38.
- ¹¹ "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community: Draft Study Document", FO/89:6, ch. IV: "Unity and Renewal and...(a) The Search for Justice", para. 17.
- ¹² Consultation report, para. 8. See *Living Today Towards Visible Unity: the Fifth International Consultation of United and Uniting Churches*, Thomas F. Best ed., Faith and Order Paper No. 142, Geneva, WCC, 1988, p.6.
- ¹³ Central Committee of the WCC, Minutes of the Thirty-Eighth Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland, 16-24 January 1987, Geneva, WCC, 1987, p.44.
- ¹⁴ The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community, *op. cit.*, chapter IV, para. 3.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, ch. IV, para. 29.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, ch. III, "Kingdom — Church — Humanity", para. 9.
- ¹⁷ John Austin Baker, "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community", in *Faith and Renewal*, *op. cit.*, pp.169-176; see p.175.
- ¹⁸ "The Unity of the Church", *op. cit.*, ch. III, para. 19.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 27.
- ²⁰ See *Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Commission, 1984, Crete*, Faith and Order Paper No. 121, Geneva, WCC, 1984, pp.47-48,49-52.
- ²¹ Mary Tanner, "Unity and Renewal: the Church and the Human Community", in *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 36, No. 3, July 1984.

Overview of the Unity and Renewal Study Programme

I. The process towards the draft study document

A. Programme elements

1. Reflection on the church as mystery and prophetic sign
 - a) Consultation (Chantilly, 1985)
 - b) Continuing review and development by steering group (1985-88)
2. Ecclesiological implications of the churches' involvement in issues of justice
 - a) Consultation (Singapore, 1986)
 - b) Consultation (Porto Alegre, Brazil, 1987)
 - c) Consultation (Harlem, USA, 1988)
 - d) Initial integration of results (steering group, Boston, 1988)
3. Ecclesiological implications of issues of the community of women and men
 - a) Consultation (Prague, Czechoslovakia, 1985)
 - b) Consultation (Porto Novo, Benin, 1988)
 - c) Initial integration of results (consultation, Cambridge, UK, 1989)

B. Integration of above elements

Consultation (steering group and advisers, Leuenberg, Switzerland, 1989), resulting in the text: "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community: Draft Study Document" (FO/89:6).

II. Reflection in local study groups on issues of unity and renewal

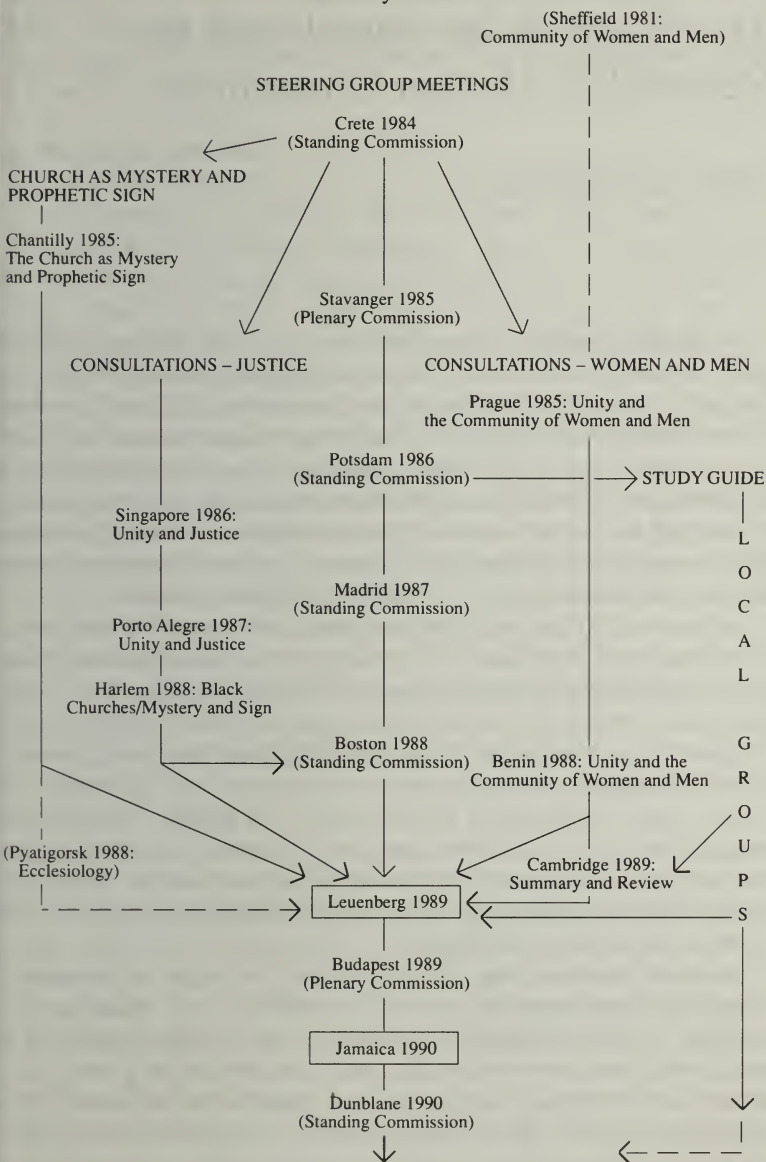
- A. Development and distribution of unity and renewal study guide (1987-)
- B. Initial review of local group process (consultation, Cambridge, UK, 1989)

III. Future work

- A. Development of unity and renewal study document in light of the Budapest discussion.
- B. Development of local study group process and interaction of results with study document
- C. Identification of possible new themes for work

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH
AND THE RENEWAL OF HUMAN COMMUNITY

The Study Process



The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community

LETTY M. RUSSELL

I have been invited to respond to the draft study document on "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community", "... from the perspective of my situation and theological thinking". And I am happy to have this opportunity to share some of my thoughts as a white, middle-class woman living in the North American context and representing the Presbyterian Church, USA, at this Commission meeting. My particular theological perspective is that of a feminist/liberation theologian engaged in advocacy for women and for all oppressed groups through the teaching of systematic theology at Yale University Divinity School.

Let me say that I rejoiced in the proposal that we take up this study in Lima, and was very glad that it managed to move forward through Stavanger to Budapest with a strong ecclesiological focus. As a participant in the community of women and men in the church study, I was also delighted to see that the challenge of Sheffield and the final Lima report found a response in the earnest desire of Faith and Order for further study of unity and renewal from the perspective of groups engaged in the struggle for justice, and for the community of women and men in church and society. I appreciate the hard work of the staff and the Commission members who bring this report to us in spite of limited time and financial resources for extensive research.

I want to respond, from my own context and that of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCCUSA). Faith and Order working group on unity and renewal, to two major factors in the document. I want also to urge that time and attention be given to these factors in the revisions made to the text. The first is in the area of the theological question: What is the basic existential question being addressed in this document? And is that question one that does justice to the

cries of the oppressed, voiced through the contextual situations of sexism, racism and injustice which were to be the prism of this study? The second is in the area of theological method used in the study: Does the hard and careful work that has gone into this study pay off in terms of a breakthrough in the combining of the methods of convergence and of contextual analysis?

The theological question

As one reads the document, with its opening discussion of the themes of church, kingdom and sign and its later report of the community of women and men and justice consultations, there is, given the crucial questions that are facing the church and society today, a curious lack of passion. There may be a crisis, but somehow the words leave us convinced that all is well with God's plan and with the church's participation as a sign of that mystery. It seems to me that one of the problems plaguing the document, and its rather separate parts, is that the theological question is not that which would be asked in the contexts where the insights were being tested.

The question to which the report speaks appears to be: how is it theologically possible to relate the unity of the church, and its need for renewal, to the contemporary crisis of disunity and injustice in the worldwide human community? The answer is given in the very careful working out of the way the church and world are caught up together in God's plan for the new creation. They find their unity and renewal not only in tension with each other, but as joint participants in God's work of new creation. Thus the report does move in the direction of what Günther Gassmann described yesterday as demonstrating "... theologically the way in which these two emphases are organically inter-related".¹

The question to which the report *might well speak in a more organic way* is that of how our traditional understandings of ecclesiology are informed, shifted, or broken open in new ways when we look at them through the prism of communities of faith and struggle. The two contextual chapters are connected in the report through the use of biblical texts such as Romans 14:17 on life in the kingdom as justice, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, as well as Galatians 3 and Ephesians 2 on "... breaking down barriers which will enable the whole human community to live in peace".² But the ecclesiology itself is not very much informed by the perspective of faith communities struggling directly with issues of injustice, racism and sexism. Here one should compare the approach of the

unity and renewal study being pursued by the Commission on Faith and Order of the NCCUSA.³

Beyond this, the *questions of communities of faith and struggle* have not been allowed to give a cutting edge of passion and compassion to the text. In the midst of a symphony of death and groaning, people in the churches on every continent ask: "Where is the hope?" And they often find it in places such as South America, the Philippines, Central America and the Middle East — whenever churches share *the sign of the cross* as a mark of hope among the people. Perhaps Ernst Käsemann was right after all that it is the cross and not the church itself that is "the true sign of the kingdom".⁴

In the same search for hope, feminist Christian communities in many parts of the world are asking whether there is any ecclesiology that is capable of being in touch with scripture and Tradition, while advocating the full community of partnership of women with men in the church. The text of the report does not even approach this radical questioning of the church itself. Rather it repeats, in a general way, some of the themes of the old community study — often losing the cutting edge of the work done previously in much greater detail. If, as John Deschner says, the task of Faith and Order is to be a *questioner* to the churches, this task needs further consideration in the unity and renewal report.⁵

The methodological question

This brings me to my second consideration, that of the theological methods used in the report. At present there is a lack of integration of the chapters. Combining the method of convergence in chapters II and III with the contextual method in chapters IV and V has not been entirely successful. While rejoicing that we have a text that has been willing to use both theological methods, I would still urge a more careful use of the methods within one theological circle — rather than in two separate circles which have been attached to each other in a report.

It is clear that the theme of kingdom as well as that of God's plan of salvation, the *missio Dei*, both provide a framework that can make it possible to discover, as the report says, that both church and humanity have "a common origin and common goal" in God's creation and God's kingdom.⁶ Yet the method used, that of establishing a theological framework and trying to illustrate it with the justice and community consultations, seems to perpetuate a dualism of church and world, unity and renewal. In the section on justice, for instance, there is an appeal to scripture and Tradition and the importance of linkages between them,⁷

but the document itself does not consistently make use of *all* parts of the theological circle. As I have noted above the radical questions about ecclesiology, and the new insights into the nature of the church emerging from basic Christian communities and from feminist Christian communities, are not allowed to question and challenge the tradition so that new insights and actions can be developed.

A way to look at this has been proposed by Bert Hoedemaker,⁸ and I am sorry he is not here to discuss this with us. Bert has pointed out that the "middle ground" discourse between the study of the church and the human community is that of churches engaged in witness and service. It is the struggle of these communities of faith to be a sign of God's new creation that provides clues to a new understanding of ecclesiology and the gift of unity. Perhaps the local study group reports will help us here as we continue our work. We need to look more carefully at this *prismatic* possibility as we seek to bring our ecumenical methods into creative tension.

I am glad to hear from the Pyatigorsk consultation on ecclesiology that we will be working on our many *contrasting ecclesiologies*.⁹ For the unity and renewal report provides us with an abundance of contrast, as well as the possibility of moving ahead in our common task of relating the unity of the church to its participation in God's mission in the world.

NOTES

¹ See p.60 above.

² "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community: Draft Study Document", FO/89:6, ch. II, paras 22,32.

³ See from this study its "Prospectus 1989-91".

⁴ Cited in Günther Gassmann, "The Church as Sacrament, Sign and Instrument: the Reception of this Ecclesiological Understanding in Ecumenical Debate", in *Church, Kingdom, World: the Church as Mystery and Prophetic Sign*, Gennadios Limouris ed., Faith and Order Paper No. 130, Geneva, WCC, 1986, p.8.

⁵ See pp.50-52 above.

⁶ "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community: Draft Study Document", *op.cit.*, ch. III, para. 1.

⁷ *Ibid.*, ch. IV, paras 11-14.

⁸ In an unpublished paper, "Comments on the Relation between Situational Analysis and Ecclesiological Discussion".

⁹ Report of the "Consultation on Ecclesiology: Basic Ecumenical Perspectives", Pyatigorsk, USSR, 22-29 November 1988, FO/89:1, p.3.

The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community: a Roman Catholic Response

BRUNO FORTE

I must first apologize for the fact that the response which I will present is rather improvised. In fact Monseigneur Monsengwo Pasinya, the archbishop of Kisangi, Zaire, was originally supposed to have given this brief presentation. As he has not yet arrived in Budapest, I was asked at the end of this morning's session to substitute for him. So I apologize not only for the fact that only a humble theologian is speaking to you — instead of an archbishop — but also because I had to gather my thoughts in haste, simply in order to share them with you.

First of all I would like to thank all those who have worked on the text "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community" for the remarkable service which they have rendered to the cause of unity. There is much in this work which I would be ready to subscribe to with conviction. As a theologian I approve especially of the theological orientation and fundamental structure of the text; it views the church, on the foundation of the biblical witness as a whole, in the perspective of the kingdom of God while at the same time taking seriously the challenges of our own times.

This way of considering the church as being in the interior of the circle of the economy of salvation is not only rooted profoundly in scripture, but is also rich in pastoral significance — or indeed, as was said yesterday, it reflects a theological inspiration which is living and coherent (the "vital and coherent ecumenical theology" mentioned by John Deschner¹). The proclamation of the kingdom which is coming touches church and world, faith and action, present and future.

Having given this general and fundamental appreciation of the biblical, eschatological and existential character of the unity and renewal document, I would like to offer some critical remarks with the very positive

intention of helping to build up and continue this work. It is not only Faith and Order which must "question" the churches, but also our Commission must allow itself *to be* questioned and *to be* critiqued in order to accomplish its task in the service of unity. It is in this sense that I accept the two positions which have been expressed here by Jean Tillard and John Deschner.

I will gather my comments around three elements which indicate the main ecclesiological theme of the document — a theme which was requested from Faith and Order by the Vancouver Assembly and is accepted explicitly in this text,² confirming, in my opinion, that the field of ecclesiology is the future of the theological and spiritual work for unity. These three elements are: (1) the origin of the church (the living remembrance of the Trinitarian initiative); (2) the church "between the times", *inter tempora* (the awareness of the present); (3) the future of the church (the prophecy of the eschaton).

The Trinitarian origin of the church

The text speaks of unity and renewal in light of the kingdom, and through that of the church seen as mystery, as "glory" hidden and shared under the signs of history. One would have liked the Trinitarian rooting of the ecclesial communion, which is indeed indicated by the text, to have been more fully developed. One could have delineated the Trinitarian structure of the economy of salvation, that is, the purpose of the Father, the mission of the Son and the mission of the Spirit. The primacy of God, the *solī Deo gloria*, is truly acknowledged and celebrated only if one underlines the Trinitarian economy of salvation. All comes from the Father through the Son in the Spirit, and all returns to the Father by the same incarnate word in the Comforter. The perspective of an inclusive Trinitarian theology, about which Jan Lochman spoke very well yesterday,³ must be made precise and contextualized. The Singapore unity and renewal meeting on unity and justice, cited in the unity and renewal text, says: "The church, instead, has to understand herself and her mission in relation to this work of God and the Spirit in the world... [this] shows how important it is to develop today an ecclesiology based on the mystery of the Trinity."⁴ I love to call the church the "icon of the Trinity", and this is exactly the title which I have given to the book which gathers together my readings at Bossey.⁵

In the same context I see the necessity of making more precise and deepening the relations between the kingdom of God, creation and covenant; only a Trinitarian perspective can help us understand these

complex inter-relations, as the document "Your Kingdom Come", from the meeting of European churches at Erfurt, shows well.⁶ This text, I believe, must be taken up and integrated into the one which we are presently discussing.

The living memory of the Trinitarian origin of the church is present and active in the celebration of the eucharist; Trinitarian ecclesiology and eucharistic ecclesiology come together. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* on this point could well be used to help in the development of our work. Eucharistic unity is always the goal of the life and the work of the WCC.

In speaking of the church as mystery, one could also use the word "sacrament" in clarifying the Trinitarian scope of this theological term, utilizing the experience of the BEM process.

Finally, one could better emphasize the consequences at the pastoral level of this "memory" of the Trinitarian origin of the church, in affirming the primacy of the contemplative dimension in ecclesial life, as an attitude of listening in faith and obedience to the divine primacy.

The church in the present

Concerning the church in the present — in the situation which the fathers of Vatican II called the *entre temps* of the church, the time between the promise which has been given and that which has not yet been accomplished — I would see the necessity of underlining the relation between the Trinitarian *perichoresis* and what one could call the ecclesiological *perichoresis*. This is the necessity of deepening that concept of community, of unity in diversity, which establishes a climate of reciprocity and dialogue. Here is the place to underline the importance of the local church (as the unity and renewal text does)⁷ of the dialogue which goes on inside the church and of the communion between the churches within the church universal.

In my opinion this is the most appropriate place to speak theologically about the communion of women and men in the church, acknowledging the dignity of each woman and each man within the variety of gifts and ministries. Even the discussion on the ordination of women may be helped by an ecclesiology of communion which actualizes the identity of each person — without confusing being ordained with a state of privilege which one "owns". It is not ordination which establishes the dignity of each person within the church. One could even give prominence to the pastoral consequence of the rediscovery of the communion as Trinitarian form of the church, by integrating here a reflection on dialogue as the distinctive attitude of the ecclesial life.

The church and the future

The eschatological perspective is well presented in this text, especially in chapter VI. A church included within the horizon of God's promise, and God's future for the world, is a church which is open to reforming itself continually and is open to the renewal of the world.

It is in this light that one may underline the role of bringing a critical consciousness to bear upon history in obedience to the gospel, this being the task of the church over against the problems of justice, peace and the integrity of creation. It is this eschatological tension, this theological hope, which prevents one from succumbing to the tendency to fall into every pragmatism — a tendency as dangerous to the cause of the gospel as to the cause of humanity itself.

Here the results of the Basel assembly on issues of justice and peace of the Conference of European Churches⁸ could be taken up and integrated into the text, or even better into the ecclesiological perspective of all those who work at the WCC towards the proclamation of the faith and in service to the world.

In conclusion, I would like simply to emphasize that a clearer Trinitarian perspective might help to integrate the different ecclesiologies to which the text bears witness — without sacrificing them and especially without sacrificing the richness of life and the experience of mystery which each represents.

NOTES

¹ See pp.46-49 above.

² "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community: Draft Study Document", FO/89:6, ch. I, para. 14.

³ See pp.292-293 below.

⁴ "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community", *op. cit.*, ch. IV, para. 18. (The report is, at this point, quoting the paper by Felix Wilfred, "Action Groups and the Struggle for Justice in India: Ecclesiological Implications", subsequently published in *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 39, No. 3, July 1987; see p.305 — ed. note.)

⁵ *L'Eglise, icône de la Trinité. Brève ecclesiologie*, Paris, Médiaspaul, 1985.

⁶ "Thy Kingdom Come: Report of the Fourth European Ecumenical Encounter", Geneva and St Gallen, Concilium Conferentiarum Episcopaliū Europae and Conference of European Churches, 1989.

⁷ Ch. V, para. 35.

⁸ See *Peace with Justice*, Geneva, Conference of European Churches, 1989.

The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community: An Orthodox Response

EMMANUEL CLAPSIS

The study "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community" represents an admirable effort to build an ecumenical ecclesiology that may help us transcend (without having to deny) our particular ecclesiologies, which were and continue to be barriers to the common witness of Christians in the life of the world. Faith and Order demands openness and dialogue towards a mutual enrichment of our particular ecclesiologies, with the ultimate purpose of recognizing our unity within a credible diversity of our actual ecclesial existence.

The study attempts to develop, or rather conceive, the being of the church as simultaneously constituted by what it is by the power of the Holy Spirit, and also by what it does in the world as a result of its participation in the life of the Triune God. It brings what has been called "classical ecclesiology" to "mutual fermentation" with "contextual ecclesiologies". It advocates that the church must be understood from the coming reality of God's kingdom; and as a result of this, the church exists for the salvation of the whole world, a world whose life and problems cannot be ignored.

The unity and renewal study is a beginning of a process, and it is possible for it to be improved through our contributions. We can read this study selectively, and be either negative in our judgments or enthusiastic for its intentions. But whatever we do we must not forget the courageous attempt of this study to bring isolated, and mutually suspicious, ecclesiologies into a dialogue of enrichment.

Since I was asked only three hours ago to respond to this document from an Orthodox perspective, I have to commend the study generally for its efforts — and why not also for its accomplishments? It is instructive on

how theology can be incarnated in actions of love which advance the cause of peace, justice and the communion of love between men and women. I can also appreciate the refusal of the study to conceive the church only as just another agency of social change.

The study needs to reflect further on the theological meaning of human efforts for the advancement of peace and justice in the world from the perspective of the reality of God's kingdom, which is an unconditional gift of God's love. Some may discern in the document a "soft utopianism", an over-optimistic appreciation of human efforts as instruments that bring the world closer to God's kingdom without adequate appreciation of the possibilities of corruption, distortion and brokenness that affect even Christian acts in history.

In order to manifest the interconnection between the church and God's creation, the unity and renewal study has chosen — consciously or unconsciously — two specific issues which call for the healing and transfigurative involvement and witness of the church. These are the concerns for justice and for the community between women and men. I can appreciate how important these two issues are for all of us and especially for the new majorities of the WCC. But I am obliged to speak for other voiceless minorities who suffer as a result of totalitarianism and lack of freedom. The notion of the human quest for justice should be studied in relation to freedom. Justice without freedom may lead to totalitarianism and oppression, and freedom without justice may perpetuate the unjust suffering of the many and increase the prosperity of the few.

Social realities and situations are intrinsically ambiguous in nature, and they need to be analyzed before they can be interpreted theologically. How and in what manner we can act effectively in such situations is also another complex issue with no single response. The study "reads" social realities and suggests possibilities of common action for the advancement of justice and peace. I would suggest further reflection on the nature of the social analysis which we use in our study for the understanding of social realities. In addition we must further reflect in common on how the church, or Christians, can exercise discernment as they act within an inevitably ambiguous social context, for the transfiguration of the world. This is important, especially when Christians have opted for radical actions that demand profound sacrifices by men and women.

Finally, while taking for granted that the church should be involved and should act for the advancement of justice and peace in the world, we must

be aware that Christians will be further divided — if they are not already divided — not on this theology, but on their perception of what is injustice and oppression, and on how the church should act in intense situations of social conflict and divisions. From this perspective we must accommodate, in our perception of church unity, possibilities of diverse opinions and actions for the healing of the brokenness of the world — but without this diversity leading to further divisions.

Group Discussion and Plenary Action

Process of Reflection

Five groups met to discuss the preparatory text "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community: Draft Study Document" in light of the unity and renewal presentations, responses and debate in plenary. All groups pursued discussion and reflection on the draft study text as a whole; then each group considered the inter-relation of particular elements of the text (for example, the chapter on issues of unity and justice in relation to that on the church as mystery and prophetic sign). In addition the groups were asked to reflect upon the future of the study.

Recorders in each group took careful account of the discussion; these accounts were then brought together into a single report for presentation to plenary (time did not permit some groups to review the proposed joint text). The combined report was discussed and then voted upon by plenary, as indicated below.

Some sections (particularly paragraphs 2 through 14) of the report offered detailed editorial comments for the next revision of the unity and renewal study document; as explained in the editor's introduction, these sections have been transmitted to the unity and renewal steering group but are not included here.

Group Report. The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community: Report of the Work Done in the Five Groups

1. The groups at Budapest, with their varied composition and backgrounds, approached their tasks in different ways but the drafting meeting

of the five group reporters found its task made possible and even enjoyable because the conclusions of the groups revealed a widespread (though not unanimous) approval of the main purpose and drive of the text, and enthusiasm for the methodology employed. The approval and enthusiasm went with a clear convergence on certain requirements for maturation of the text through revision and proposals for the future of the study....

Development of the study

15. Despite all the requests for clarification, additional material and alterations, the text should not be significantly enlarged.

16. Before any significant revision takes place the text should be sent to selected individuals and groups who could advise the steering group how it could make the study more accessible to different cultures and milieus (e.g. by additional questions at the end of chapters and the plan of a study guide).

Preparation of the text

17. Questions should be added at the end of each chapter to enable people to relate the study to their own context and experience. After alterations, additions and clarifications, the text will need to be translated not only linguistically but cross-culturally as well. The revised text should be published in an attractive illustrated format and issued as a preparatory document for the Canberra Assembly in 1991.

Dissemination of the study

18. Along with the study report a short pamphlet should be prepared to remind people of the aim of the study and its theological method, and invite them to respond to Faith and Order. It was thought that regional and local groups would be helped by the "Brief Overview of the Faith and Order Movement" booklet by John Deschner being circulated with the study itself.

19. The study should be circulated to all the churches with an emphasis on the work being done at the "lowest level". The following groups should be included in the circulation: heads of churches and ecumenical officers; members of the Faith and Order Plenary Commission; regional Christian councils; national ecumenical councils; theological centres, including lay training centres; participants in consultations; groups involved in justice issues; women's groups; groups of, and those working with, handicapped persons; those previously seeking help towards renewal of the church.

General questions and reflections

20. Questions will be difficult to phrase because of the diverse situations in which the text will be studied. Local groups and congregations will need to do their own contextualization. The following general questions should be asked:

- a) To what extent do you find the life of your community reflected in this text?
- b) How does the text challenge the life of your community?
- c) What areas of agreement or disagreement do you find?

If the steering group is to take this study to further stages of development, it will need to have the stories of how the study relates to individual communities. A paradigm for this process is the project "The Hope that is in Us" (see the Faith and Order Commission meetings at Louvain, 1971; Accra, 1974; Bangalore, 1978).

The study as addressed to the WCC

21. The study should be addressed to the WCC and its individual units in two ways:

- a) Each unit to be asked: "Does this study reflect the theological undergirding of your work?"
- b) The reports on current work being done by other units within the WCC should be scrutinized by the steering group and points of contact noted, reflected upon and shared with both Faith and Order and the unit concerned.

Future areas of work

22. There are a number of possible areas of work that might still be done by the unity and renewal study:

- a) a new project to focus on ecclesiology;
- b) a study of nationalism in relation to the unity and renewal theme;
- c) a study of relations with other faiths;
- d) dialogue with ideologies concerned with the renewal of society;
- e) language and the unity and renewal of the human community;
- f) first-world responsibilities in the consideration of justice issues.

23. The study should be related not only to other Faith and Order studies but also to the Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women and to the programme on justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

The groups strongly recommended:

- a) that the Plenary Commission be asked to receive the text and approve its transmission to the churches, after suitable revision by the steering group, for reflection, for response and for use in the churches' own programmes, planning and search for unity and renewal;
- b) that the study be continued and matured within a fresh Faith and Order focus on ecclesiology, though not simply as a sub-theme of a new "project"; rather the present three main studies of Faith and Order should be given further time before and after the Canberra Assembly to converge and interact;
- c) the local study groups should be encouraged to feed their results into such a future programme rather than into long-term revision of the present text; the present text could be used in connection with some of such local study groups if accompanied by suitable interpretative material.

Additional staff

24. Faith and Order should be asked to employ an additional staff member for a limited period, to stimulate responses to the draft text and the group study guide. Further, the new staff member should collect responses to the study particularly from non-traditional Christian groups and communities and seek funding for and organize regional meetings for study and response to the text.

Plenary Discussion and Action

The combined report from the five groups was read by Nancy Cocks, with 19 persons taking part in the ensuing discussion.

The steering group was commended for its effort to "reconcile what is being called the 'classical' and the 'contextual'" theological approaches, to help Christians from different traditions share their diverse epistemologies and ways of using language. This could be helpful in unifying the work of Faith and Order and indeed the whole WCC, in "reconciling divisions within traditionally ecumenical churches", in making contacts with churches not yet part of the ecumenical movement, and in relating our work to a broader constituency both inside and outside the churches. Some emphasized the need to share the text with the churches and to

promote the widest possible discussion of the text, particularly in light of its potential contribution to the Canberra Assembly.

At the same time there was a call for more work on methodology and for a more systematic and thorough social and theological analysis, particularly of the concept of "justice"; the text was not yet sufficiently clear and incisive to "speak a compelling word to secular thinkers" as well as to the churches. An appropriate use of contributions from the social sciences was urged, but commissioners were also reminded of the "adequate and accessible methodologies" already available within theological circles, and of the need for the text to make a distinctively Christian contribution to the discussion.

There was agreement that the various chapters of the document should be more closely integrated. Some favoured the present order of the text which offers the ecclesiological categories of kingdom, and of church as mystery and prophetic sign, as a basis on which to "begin theologically, then to deal with the brokenness of the world and the role of the church as a community of renewal". Others felt that the text should begin with the chapters on Christian experience in witness for justice and for a more authentic community of women and men, so that the basic ecclesiological principles could be re-affirmed — and with deeper understanding — after theological reflection on that experience in the light of both scripture and Tradition.

If the document wished to speak a prophetic word today, it was said, it must not accept the modern idea of "progress" too readily, but rather help the churches find "gospel criteria" to discern "authentic" progress and, where necessary, to say "no" to the world in light of faith. It was noted that the issue of nationalism was becoming crucial within the discussion of unity: how does the Christian's belonging to the one, universal church relate to his or her loyalty to a particular nation? No major ecumenical study has been done in this field since the Oxford conference in the late 1930s, and further work is urgently needed.

On the issue of the ordination of women it was emphasized that the full effects of this have not yet been realized, and many difficulties remain for women who are ordained. It had never been claimed that the ordination of women would, in itself, lead to "transformation and renewal" in the church, though it might well be a sign of those things. It was emphasized that this practise must

be understood within the broader context of the search for the full participation of women in the life of the church. Commissioners were reminded of efforts towards this broader goal within some churches which do not ordain women to priesthood of word and sacrament (for example, through efforts to re-institute the ancient order of the deaconess).

Many further topics were proposed for closer study. There were calls for a clearer view of the relationship between unity and renewal — some “renewal”, after all, leads rather to *disunity*, at least in the short term. It was affirmed that only an inner, spiritual renewal leading to repentance can be the source of a new unity and of social renewal. The topic of power within the church and its structures of ministry needs urgent attention; and the text should reflect upon the concept of agape, referring possibly to 1 John 4:7-21. The concept of *koinonia* would repay further study. Care was urged in distinguishing between the terms “roles” and “orders”, and in using the term “sin” (some things are indeed tragic but not precisely “sinful”); in referring to differently abled persons in language consistent with other WCC documents; in acknowledging the important role of youth in the search for unity, and the special role of the poor in God’s plan.

One commissioner illustrated, through an imaginary “letter” written to a colleague, the kind of exchange between Christians which he hopes this study will engender. This was a poignantly personal example of the mutual challenge, affirmation and enrichment which Christians in their different contexts might bring to one another.

Following the discussion, steering group moderator Paul Crow moved the following:

That the report of the unity and renewal study be received by the Plenary Commission and referred, together with the plenary and small group discussions, to the Standing Commission and the steering group for use in carrying out the future programme of the study as recommended, noting that this will require of the steering group and the Standing Commission a careful and open-ended assessment of the progress made towards maturation of the study in the text submitted to the Standing Commission in August 1990.

This was approved unanimously, with abstentions.

Ongoing Tasks of Faith and Order



Ongoing Tasks: Moderator's Remarks

MARTIN CRESSEY

This session, with the usual ninety minutes time, has three themes instead of one; they are referred to as "ongoing tasks", and they are (1) the participation of Faith and Order in the planning for the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity; (2) the help given by the Faith and Order Commission to united and uniting churches at the request of these churches; and (3) the concern of Faith and Order for the inter-relation of bilateral and multilateral dialogues, highlighted in John Deschner's report at the beginning of this plenary meeting.

I want in these opening remarks to emphasize how these three themes are not items of disconnected remaining business of the Commission. They are "ongoing tasks" because precisely they express the essence of the Commission's task — the unity we seek was described at New Delhi as "God's will and gift" and therefore must be the subject of prayer to the God who wills and gives unity. The unity we seek must at some point and in some way be embodied — united and uniting churches do not claim to have arrived at a definitive embodiment but they have taken costly steps towards it; and the Commission has repeatedly recognized that the various forms of ecumenical progress are inter-related. Each bilateral conversation provides the means whereby two Christian World Communions can engage with those issues that directly arise between them, and in doing so can both help and learn from the multilateral process and the local efforts for unity.

For this reason the presentations connected with the three themes will now be made, one following the other — with a maximum of 15 minutes for each (a bell will alert the presenter that the maximum is near). There will then be forty minutes for plenary discussion. In sending in your name please add a word — either "prayer" or "united" or "bilateral" or (and this

is an important fourth possibility) “general” to show that your comment relates to the inter-relation of the themes. There will then be about ten minutes for speakers on each of these four areas of discussion — and in our next session there will be group work, which will enable any whose names are not reached in plenary to contribute their insights.

Process of Reflection on the Three Ongoing Tasks

Following the plenary presentations and discussion on Faith and Order’s ongoing tasks, Commission members divided into six working groups — two each for the Week of Prayer and spirituality, united and uniting churches, and bilateral conversations. On the basis of the background papers and plenary presentations and discussion, the groups reviewed developments since Stavanger in their respective areas and discussed possible future programme directions and emphases.

The reports from the groups were then considered in plenary (time had not permitted some groups to review the proposed account of their discussion). Each of the three ongoing tasks was considered in turn, with the reports from the two groups which had worked in that area being presented and discussed. Following this process the six reports were voted upon in a single motion, as recorded at the end of this section.

United and Uniting Churches

Background Paper

Among the functions of the Faith and Order Commission is its mandate to "provide opportunities for consultations among those whose churches are engaged in union negotiations or other specific efforts towards unity..." (By-laws 2.g). In fulfilment of this, two and one-half years of reflection, preparation and organization culminated, 1-8 July 1987, in the fifth international consultation of united and uniting churches (Potsdam, GDR). The meeting was hosted by the Evangelische Kirche der Union (— Bereich DDR —) with the close support of the Evangelische Kirche der Union (— Bereich BRD und Berlin West —).

The consultation focused on four areas: the question of models of union from the perspective of churches which had actually united, or were working towards union; mission as practised by united churches; participation in united church life and union processes; and the experience of life in locally-united or co-operating congregations. An unusually broad range of approaches to closer visible unity was represented, including recent intraconfessional union efforts and federations of churches. The full consultation material has been published in English as *Living Today Towards Visible Unity*,¹ and the report and major papers in German (through the kind assistance of the Kirchenkanzlei der EKU (Bereich BRD und Berlin West) as *Gemeinsam auf dem Weg zur sichtbaren Einheit*.²

The Potsdam consultation marked a new insistence among the united and uniting churches on seeing themselves within the one ecumenical movement. Since the meeting its continuation committee has enabled the united and uniting churches to address several important issues, including the distinctive contribution made by united churches which have achieved episcopal structures (there was fruitful discussion in this area before and

at the Lambeth conference); an input from the united and uniting churches to the seventh WCC Assembly in Canberra (1991); and proposals for a sixth international consultation of united and uniting churches, perhaps focusing on their witness as churches which have in fact already achieved "common structures of decision-making and teaching authoritatively".

Two editions of the biennial "Survey of Church Union Negotiations" have appeared since the last Plenary Commission meeting in 1985.³ These have marked the progress and problems of union negotiations (most notably the successful completion of two large and complex schemes of organic union — albeit in intraconfessional contexts). The introductions to these surveys have raised significant issues and trends for wide discussion, most importantly the developing understanding of organic unity in light of recent "partnership" and "covenanting" schemes of union; the emergence of a clear commitment to, and concrete steps towards, church union within the context of new national ecumenical bodies; and continued work on the integration of episcopal with non-episcopal church orders. These issues will require careful attention at the sixth international consultation.

In addition, staff visits to united churches and unity endeavours in diverse contexts and regions (Africa, Asia, the Pacific, Europe, North America, Latin America) have enabled personal contact with their visions and concerns. Finally, one issue of the *Church Union Newsletter* was produced (April 1986).⁴

NOTES

¹ Thomas F. Best ed., *Faith and Order Paper No. 142*, Geneva, WCC, 1988

² Thomas F. Best Hrsg., Berlin, Veröffentlichung der Kirchenkanzlei der Evangelischen Kirche der Union, 1988.

³ *Faith and Order Paper No. 133*, *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 38, October 1986, and *Faith and Order Paper No. 146*, *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 41, No. 2, April 1989.

⁴ Issue No. 8, 25 April 1986; available from the Faith and Order secretariat.

The United-Uniting Churches and the Wider Ecumenical Task

ABRAHAM KURUVILLA

The purpose of this brief paper is to highlight the contributions of the movement of unity among churches to the wider ecumenical task. This is attempted by a brief reflection on the existing models of unity and the trends emerging in this area. This reflection is made in the light of the discussions at the fifth international consultation of united and uniting churches held in Potsdam (GDR).¹ We will also attempt to portray the implications of the efforts being made towards the unity and renewal of humankind.

Movement towards pluralism

The classical model of church union may be said to have consisted of three components:

- 1) an agreement in faith and order;
- 2) mutual recognition of ministry, membership and sacraments;
- 3) a unified administrative structure.

The ideal was to maximize agreement in all areas and to unify structures of decision making. However, developments in secular society towards pluralism have had an impact on this classical picture of church unity. In the present world pluralism is not only tolerated but, in many cases, accepted as good. As Paul Crow pointed out at Potsdam, "... the modern ecumenical movement has led Christians in all traditions to confess and claim a legitimate pluralism".² The positive affirmation of pluralism in the unity of the churches is, in part, a contribution of the Christian World Communions. The model of "reconciled diversity" is an expression of this which has originated in the Lutheran World Federation. But this affirmation of pluralism is also behind the idea of a communion of communions in the Roman Catholic tradition and the model of "conciliar

fellowship" evolved by the World Council of Churches at Nairobi. It may be said that these models of unity, namely reconciled diversity, communion of communions and conciliar fellowship, have inbuilt provision for the affirmation of diversities which are considered to be positive. These three models, therefore, may be said to be standing in tension with the older model of organic union. A proper understanding of this tension, the possibilities involved in each model and the limitations also involved in the models are all worth reflecting on. In the following paragraphs, therefore, we proceed to a consideration of this tension between organic union and the pluriform models.

Models of unity

Among the pluriform models reconciled diversity is the most open, as it insists neither on an agreement in Faith and Order nor on a unified administrative structure. Conciliar fellowship, however, does envisage a level of agreement in faith and order sufficient to allow the mutual recognition of membership, ministry and sacraments. In communion of communions there is provision for the preservation and fostering of the genius of each communion, while there is centralized authority as well as a minimum agreement on issues of faith and order.

These models do envisage the identification and removal of elements which are scandalous to the very nature of the gospel. However, the identity of each denomination or communion continues. An important question that has to be posed to these models is: How will the communions or denominations visibly manifest their unity so that the world may believe? It is all too easy for them to move along parallel lines with hardly any "communion" among the constituent units. The danger is all the greater when denominational boundaries coincide or nearly coincide with stratifications in society such as those due to race, ethnicity, caste, class or language. The plea for a pluriform model of unity may be, in some cases, a garb for preserving the very divisions which God in Christ has broken down. Therefore deliberate and well thought-out plans for visibly manifesting the unity of the church are a must in all such models of unity. The necessity to "encounter" one another is of utmost importance. A secular analogy from India seems appropriate at this point. India has diversities of religion, language, race and caste, but in Indian cities these diversities are brought together. People of different languages, religion, race and caste live together. It is observed that over the years the power of these factors to divide people diminishes. Second-generation urban-dwellers in particular contribute to the building up of a society which

transcends, to a considerable degree, the divisions of language, race, religion and caste. The reason is the inescapable need to encounter one another in day-to-day life. But even in this transcendence we will observe successful efforts to preserve what is of value in each group. Indian cities are a living example of unity in diversity in secular life. How much more should it become possible for the churches, which confess one faith, to grow in oneness, retaining the good things of their various ecclesial traditions!

We may also have a new look at organic union as a model of unity. It has played a very important role in the history of ecumenism in India, as this is the model which was adopted by the Church of South India and the Church of North India in their formation. In these and other churches a conscious effort has been made to incorporate as much of the theology and liturgy of the constituent churches as possible. Inasmuch as the separate identities of the traditions do not continue, it is a costlier decision. The cost apart, there are also some dangers to be guarded against. When in a united church some traditions numerically outnumber some others, the smaller traditions are in danger of being eclipsed over a period of time. The other possible danger is from social stratification on the basis of race, language, caste and class. When groups belonging to these different strata are brought together in a unified administrative structure, the power politics that may follow can create a considerable amount of conflict and tension in the church. These conflicts always have dual possibilities. If creatively resolved, they have the potential for being a mighty witness to the reconciling power of the gospel. If not resolved these conflicts may lead to new schisms or, worse still, constant infighting, in the united church. In the Indian ecumenical experience we have examples of both.

Our discussion above has revealed factors which need to be weighed as we proceed on our ecumenical journey. No church union ever takes place after all divisive factors or disagreements are eradicated. Organic union presupposes a high degree of faith and order agreement and a very deep longing on the part of all constituent elements for a union. Otherwise the centrifugal forces which will begin to operate may pose a serious threat to the unity of the united church. The pluralistic forms of unity, however, are possible with a lower level of agreement and allow for relatively independent growth of constituent traditions. Which model will in the long run be more productive is a decision to be made by the churches involved.

The united and uniting churches are now well aware of the limitations and possibilities discussed above. Efforts in various parts of the world to

adapt the different models to best advantage bear witness to the fact that the search for unity is still very much alive. In India, within the Joint Council of the Church of North India, the Church of South India and the Mar Thoma Church there is reasonable agreement that organic union, as manifested in the formation of the CSI or the CNI, is not to be contemplated at the present time. In other words, we are in search of a model which retains the identity of the constituent churches. However, there is also a strong feeling that the Joint Council, as it has functioned until now, has only inadequately manifested the unity of the churches. The search is continuing.

The path of covenanting in the USA, and the fostering of local ecumenical congregations, are active efforts to grow in unity without being committed to a predetermined goal. The hope is that as the churches live together in inadequate unity, more adequate forms will emerge for all those who truly seek the will of God for the church.

Unity and solidarity

We need, however, to remember that church union is not our ultimate goal. Our ultimate goal is the unity of humankind. It is this motive which is projected strongly by those who understand unity as solidarity with the poor and the marginalized. It is to be noted that some of the factors which hinder the unity of the church, such as the divisions due to race, class, caste and language, do not allow for a solution within the boundaries of the church. These are social problems which simply get manifested in the church. In the search for a new humanity, therefore, the churches are challenged to come together in order to declare their solidarity with those who are victims of a divided society. A union of churches without this expression of solidarity does not contribute to the ultimate purposes of God and may even be counter-productive.

It is also to be remembered that just as the union of churches is ultimately a gift of God, the renewal of human community is ultimately a gift of God. God is the Lord of history and God renews his creation at his own initiative, an initiative which is not always channelled through the church. In the renewal of humankind people of other faiths and no faith may also contribute. For the sake of this comprehensive renewal God works with individual persons and he changes the structures of human societies so that they may conform to divine justice. Nature itself is continuously renewed by God.

The question of the unity of the churches must be approached from this larger perspective. The church is that segment of society which sees in the

life, work, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ the most decisive act of God for the renewal of his creation.

The church is that community which has heard this word of life, which has seen him with its eyes and has touched him with its hands as St John says (1 John 1:1). The ecumenical challenge is to remain in communion with the fathers of the church who shared this experience and to renew this communion by being with Christ in his sufferings today. This concern must be reflected in the coming together of the churches in unity and their going out into the world in solidarity. Unity without solidarity for the suffering millions of this planet does not serve God's purposes. For this reason the call towards unity is a call to repentance and a call to faith in the redemptive power of the gospel.

NOTES

¹ See Thomas F. Best ed., *Living Today Towards Visible Unity: the Fifth International Consultation of United and Uniting Churches*, Faith and Order Paper No. 142, Geneva, WCC, 1988.

² "Reflections on Models of Christian Unity", in *Living Today Towards Visible Unity*, *ibid.*, p.23.

Group and Plenary Discussion

Group I Report. United-Uniting Churches: Future Prospects

1. The group acknowledges with gratitude the holding of the fifth international consultation of united and uniting churches (Potsdam, GDR, 1987) and the important opportunity for both theological reflection and sharing of experience that this provided. (The report and papers of this consultation have been provided in English as *Living Today Towards Visible Unity* and in German as *Gemeinsam auf dem Weg zur sichtbaren Einheit*.¹)

2. The group affirmed the goal of organic union as a continued focal commitment for united and uniting churches. It was stressed, however, that we need to recapture the original meaning of "organic union", implying the diversity appropriate to a healthy living body rather than "sameness". The group also expressed strong support for all definite steps taken towards the ultimate unity we seek. It was recognized, however, that there is a danger that some churches will identify exclusively with one model of unity, thus ceasing to be open to other possibilities and/or future growth towards fuller unity.

3. In recognizing the appropriateness of different models of unity for particular churches at particular times, the group pointed to the importance of the contextual variables that may affect choices. Some uniting bodies:

- a) are interconfessional while others are intraconfessional;
- b) are impacted by geographic, cultural and ethnic factors;
- c) have already experienced different models with varying levels of success.

4. The group affirmed the Potsdam statement that “progress towards full visible unity will have certain distinctive marks or signs”.² In particular, it underscored the sign of “shared suffering”, by which is meant both the common experience of suffering and the common action to alleviate it.³

5. The group made several specific suggestions for agenda items for the united churches’ preparation for the World Council of Churches’ Seventh Assembly at Canberra in 1991, and the forthcoming world conference on Faith and Order:

- a) contact with Pentecostal and charismatic churches, especially but not exclusively in the South American context;
- b) the connection between identity and nationalism;
- c) continuing discussion of the nature of the unity we seek, including the matter of common decision making;
- d) the re-introduction of the issue of open eucharistic fellowship as a powerful impetus for unity (not incidentally, our own Faith and Order meetings need to reflect — and enable us to experience — the pain of our division in this area);⁴
- e) collaboration by the Standing Commission, particularly through its members from united and uniting churches, with the Potsdam continuation committee in preparing materials for the WCC Canberra Assembly to draw out the concerns and witness of these churches.

6. The group recognized that united and uniting churches are in a peculiar position: not wishing to create yet another world organization (nor having funds to do so), they nevertheless are committed to ongoing dialogue and to their continuing relationship with Faith and Order. The group therefore expresses formally the hope that in the near future, the united and uniting churches will be given an opportunity to say whether they want another international consultation following Canberra but prior to the world conference.

NOTES

¹ Thomas F. Best ed., Faith and Order Paper No. 142, Geneva, WCC, 1988; Thomas F. Best Hrsg., Berlin, Kirchenkanzlei der Evangelischen Kirche der Union, 1988.

² “Report of the Fifth International Consultation of United and Uniting Churches”, in *ibid.*, paras 39,42-45.

³ *Ibid.*, paras 46-48.

⁴ Cf. “Guidelines for Eucharistic Celebrations at Ecumenical Gatherings”, Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes of the Thirty-Third Meeting, Geneva, WCC, 1981, appendix V, p.150.

Group II Report. The Relevance of United Churches for the Wider Ecumenical Movement

1. The living experience of the united/uniting churches has raised many problems after union. However the efforts and struggles for resolving these problems are a significant contribution to the ecumenical movement. The discussion in group I can be summarized in these three points:

Models of unity

2. What kind of unity do we seek? Considering this crucial question, the group reacted to the paper that was presented by Abraham Kuruvilla on united-uniting churches and the wider ecumenical task,¹ noting especially the three following paragraphs:

- a) The model of organic union as it is experienced in South and North India raised serious hesitations in the group, especially when organic union is understood as jurisdictional and administrative centralization. Unity should be considered more in terms of unity in faith, in communion. [see p.171 above]
- b) The local ecumenical congregations as a process towards unity was very positively considered as one way of moving towards unity. [see p.172 above]
- c) The two first sentences of this paragraph — “We need, however, to remember that church union is not our ultimate goal. Our ultimate goal is the unity of humankind” — can have controversial interpretations in some churches. For some, church union, rather than a concept of unity of humankind, would be the ultimate goal. [see p.172 above]

Sharing experiences

3. The group took some time in sharing experiences of each member concerning the efforts towards church unity in their respective contexts. That sharing showed a variety of models of unity experienced in different historical, cultural and political contexts, such as in the experiences heard from Australia, Canada, India, Indonesia, Kenya, the USA and Zaire. It was noted that both dogmatic agreements and contextual necessity must be taken seriously into consideration in these different experiences.

Sixth international consultation

4. In the light of the results of the fifth international consultation of united/uniting churches (Potsdam, GDR, 1987) there are strong expectations for a sixth international consultation to meet, as was proposed by the

Standing Commission (Boston, USA, 1988).² On this occasion a representative of an Oriental Orthodox Church (the Ancient Oriental churches) should be invited to share with the other delegates the model of unity existing among these churches. It is also expected that the Christian World Communions (Lutheran World Federation, World Methodist Conference, World Alliance of Reformed Churches, etc.), as well as new regional or national fellowships of churches, will be actively represented at the consultation.

NOTES

¹ See p.169 above.

² *Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Commission, 1988, Boston, USA: Commission on Faith and Order, Faith and Order Paper No. 145, Geneva, WCC, 1988, p.109.*

Plenary Discussion

The reports from the two discussion groups were read by Elizabeth Nordbeck and Yemba Kekumba.

Limitations of time meant that only three persons spoke to the reports. It was emphasized that the "ultimate goal" being sought is not church union in itself, or indeed any earthly goal, but the kingdom of God; the united churches need to see their vision and work in relation to this overarching theme.

The concept of "organic" union was considered. It was noted that the group taking up this theme had affirmed this "model" of union as it has been embodied in the vision of the united and uniting churches. It may, however, need re-assessment to ensure that it is sensitive to the realities of cultural diversity, such as language. The experiences, both positive and negative, of churches within "organic" unions need to be studied carefully and the resulting lessons learned by the whole ecumenical movement.

The explicit raising by one group of the issues of eucharistic fellowship was welcomed; it was felt that the ecumenical movement had "dodged this issue, which needs to be faced squarely".

These two reports were voted upon together with those from the groups on the other ongoing tasks of Faith and Order; the motion and plenary action are recorded below (see p.198).

2. Spirituality and Prayer

Week of Prayer

Background Paper

1. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which celebrated its 80th anniversary in 1988, is one major expression and instrument of our ecumenical fellowship. This week continues to be one of the ecumenical responsibilities shared equally by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church and the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches. On the basis of the work of a local ecumenical group which has developed a biblical theme with eight related texts and prayers, the preparatory annual meeting is held in order to discuss and finalize the material for publication. The different regional groups (churches, councils) will then use and adapt the text according to their specific needs (for example, in many cases translating them into their own language).

2. Since the Plenary Commission in Stavanger 1985, the following meetings of the preparatory group have been held:

- 1985 Taizé (theme: “United in Christ — a New Creation”, 2 Cor. 5:17-6:4a)
- 1986 Torre Pellice, Italy (“The Love of God Casts out Fear”, 1 John 4)
- 1987 Whaley Bridge, England (“Building Community: One Body in Christ”, Rom. 12)
- 1988 Madrid, Spain (“United in the Prayer of Christ: that they all may be one... that the world may believe”, John 17)

3. The importance of the Week of Prayer may be seen in the following events or activities:

- a) The translation of the entire text into many different languages, including Urdu, Burmese and Malagasi. We are especially pleased that, after several years of effort, we will be able to also distribute a Spanish version of the text from Geneva.

- b) The use of the texts as a basis for churches' efforts in seeking unity in local ecumenical situations, for example in Malaysia, Hungary and Zaire.
- c) A gradually growing interest on the part of third-world groups in being included in the preparation of the official Week of Prayer text. Enquiries have been received, for example, from Fiji and Zaire.
- d) Some publications on behalf of the Week of Prayer: E. Sullivan, SA, *Prayer for Unity*, Graymoor, 1987; *Ecumenical Trends*, Vol. 17, 1, 1988, Graymoor, including articles by Emilio Castro and Cardinal Willebrands to mark the 80th anniversary of the Week of Prayer.

4. For the future some attention should be given to the following concerns, which have already in part been raised at the Faith and Order Standing Commission meetings in Madrid and Boston.¹

- a) a theology of prayer as a basis for the Week of Prayer programme;
- b) the relationship between the World Day of Prayer and the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, with regard to both contents and timing;
- c) the greater participation and involvement of persons from the third world in the planning and preparation of the Week of Prayer themes and materials;
- d) the need for a more timely final editing and translation of the Week of Prayer text after the preparatory meeting (in light of frequent calls for earlier distribution of the materials);
- e) encouraging a broader and more imaginative local adaptation of the Week of Prayer materials;
- f) the extent to which local adaptation must remain faithful to the agreed style and tone, and theological orientation, of the official Week of Prayer materials;
- g) how the Week of Prayer can encourage local ecumenical activities and involvement throughout the whole year, and in relation to the other ongoing ecumenical efforts of the churches (common service projects; theological discussions, e.g. BEM; joint educational initiatives).

NOTE

¹ *Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Commission: 1987, Madrid, Spain*, Faith and Order Paper No. 141, Geneva, WCC, 1987, pp.70-71; *Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Commission: 1988, Boston, USA*, Faith and Order Paper No. 145, Geneva, WCC, 1988, pp.86-87.

Reflections on Spirituality and Prayer

KYRIAKI FITZGERALD

I would like to focus our attention on our work related to “spirituality and prayer” in the quest for Christian unity. I take this unique focus because I believe that the insights which hold true for our deliberations here will also be useful to the churches from which we come and which we represent. These insights could naturally apply in our reflections on the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, one of the important ongoing programmes of Faith and Order.

As theologians, virtually all of us have a deep sense about the meaning of the terms “spirituality” and “prayer”. Our understanding of these terms reflects, most likely, both our personal and our ecclesial experiences.

Spirituality

I would like, however, to share a few thoughts relating to “spirituality” with you. For the Orthodox Christian, one’s spiritual life concerns striving for inner authenticity. This has been frequently expressed in my tradition as a growing in the process of “purity of heart”. “Purity of heart” is not a naive state of childishness and dependency. Rather, it is the end-product of the continued efforts (*askesis*) of an integral authentic relationship between the self and God. One’s “heart”, that is, one’s intentions, priorities and very core of one’s being, is “pure” when this inner integrity has been reached. It is only through an authentic and growing relationship between the self and God that genuine, life-giving praxis can finally occur.

Spirituality, then, is a holistic enterprise, comprising the entire person. Moreover, spirituality is not only holistic — it is wholesome. It is where we dare strive to become human persons “fully alive” (Irenaeus). To lack attention to our inner authenticity — integrity — is ultimately to cut ourselves off from our own humanity.

The task of the theologian

A critical part of the process of attending to one’s spiritual life is prayer. This applies to theologians as well. Most of us are familiar with the ancient adage that “the theologian is a person of prayer”. Our “doing theology” in ecumenical work may be seen, and must be seen, as being a particular form of prayer. How effective is our work of prayer for unity?

We must first bear in mind that we are here today as an answer to the prayers of many who have gone before us. It is remarkable in light of the centuries of separation and estrangement between many of us that we are here together at all, let alone that we have been working towards unity for several decades now.

Yet, at the same time, the time may have come for more serious attention to our “inner authenticity” as individual members of Faith and Order, as well as collectively, as we continue together our unique work of prayer for Christian unity.

If we continue to look at our work together in terms of prayer, we note that there are at least two important components. There is, first of all, the content, what we say; and secondly there is the process, how we say it. Both are equally important — and indeed reflect each other.

The content is the easier dimension to observe. We see this in our study papers, reports and stated verbal priorities. It is much harder, however, to observe the process, the manner in which we do this work. This is harder to discern because we each bring our own selves into the process. We simply cannot help this from occurring, just because we are human!

Yet the personal shortcomings we bring to our deliberations greatly affect the work of Faith and Order, as well as every sub-unit in the World Council of Churches and every ecumenical endeavour.

One wonders how different our work would be if we paid more attention to our “inner authenticity”.

Four spiritual attitudes concerning the ecumenical work of prayer

1. Desire and authenticity

Desire is very important in one’s personal spiritual life. The underlying spiritual attitude here is, “where your heart is, there is your treasure also”.

With this in mind we must first ask ourselves: "How authentic is our desire for unity?"

This is a hard question to ask because it requires us to experience the pain of being divided Christians. And no one likes to feel this pain. Yet staying with this pain, remembering it constantly, carries with it, perhaps, an element of authenticity in dialogue which many of us may frequently lack.

There are at least two reasons why we direct ourselves away from pain. First of all it is frequently good to desire to avoid pain. Psychology teaches us, in fact, that it is healthy and normal to want to avoid it. Yet avoiding this particular pain only compounds our difficulties in striving for unity in the future. Confronting the experience of separation itself, although difficult, may help better motivate our response to facilitate healing.

Some of us, however, seem to have grown cold and hard to the pain of separation. A few may even personally prefer our divided situation. This may be because we perceive potential unity to be a threat to our particular status quo, whatever that may be. An expression which seems to fit this attitude is this: "Better the devil we know, than the one we don't know."

What price are we willing to pay for unity? How much do we really desire it?

2. *Humility and authenticity*

Another way of expressing this underlying spiritual attitude is "the church of Christ is bigger than I am". It seems that this may be a hard fact for some of us to remember. While we are here with our important confessional convictions concerning how the church of Christ should be, we must bear in mind that it is the Holy Spirit of God who does most of the healing, and not we ourselves. Remembering that "the church of Christ is bigger than I am" may also help us to listen to others' traditions, and even our own tradition, in a deeper, less defensive manner. This is also very hard to do, especially for people who care deeply about theoretical and practical integrity. However, depending personally on the fact that "the church of Christ is bigger than I am" allows more room for our Lord, in the Spirit, to move among us — to enable us — to heal us — as well as just to embrace us, as we continue our work towards unity.

3. *Agape and authenticity*

The underlying spiritual attitude here is "love your neighbour as you love yourself, even if he or she is your ecumenical partner in dialogue". This too, is very hard to do, because it is easier to love — or even just to

like — those with whom we agree than those with whom we do not agree or whom we cannot even understand.

There are at least two actions reflecting this spiritual attitude which we may consider taking as we work towards unity.

First of all, it is important to assume one another's good will. This seems to be quite a challenge for many of us sometimes. It may be hard to assume our partners' good will at times when we honestly cannot understand their position, let alone agree with it. Yet we must assume their good will, even if their perspectives confuse or disappoint us. This is a subtle, yet very real way of "loving our neighbour" in ecumenical work.

The second suggestion is related to the first. If we assume our neighbour's good will, then we will communicate our concerns honestly and in a non-manipulative way. We are not here to "trick", "sneak" or "manipulate" our way towards unity. This is not a battle where some of us will be winners and others the losers. Everyone, rather, is called to win. We are called to win together, because (in our good will) we are here for the sake of the same one church of Christ.

4. *Kenosis and authenticity*

In conclusion, we are called to the final, summarizing attitude — one which undergirds the previous three. And this attitude is "kenosis and authenticity".

Kenosis refers to the process of self-"emptying". Our prototype is our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who through God, took the form of a human servant, thus "emptying" himself for the sake of all people and all creation.

We too are invited, on a human level, to the work — the *askesis* — of self-emptying, of kenosis. We can do this in the three ways presented above. First, we are called to assess authentically our desire for unity. We must do this because "where our hearts are, there our treasure is also". Secondly, we are called to assess authentically our humility in the service of unity. This too is because "the church of Christ is bigger than I am". Thirdly, we are called to assess authentically our agape towards our ecumenical partners in dialogue. This is necessary because we are called to "love our neighbour as we love ourselves" — even if our neighbours happen to be our various colleagues in multilateral conversations!

May our Lord continue to enable and guide our efforts towards unity, as we seek to serve him and his holy church, so that we might give glory to him, now and forever, and unto the ages of ages.

Amen.

Group and Plenary Discussion

Group I Report. The Week of Prayer

1. Wishes

A. An evaluation of how the Week of Prayer is celebrated in different places to help churches which have no experience of it (using minutes and reports already available in several languages).

B. Theological reflection on prayer for unity.

C. Invitation to the churches to participate more actively in the Week of Prayer; try to ensure that information on the subject does not get blocked at church headquarters (but also that prayer for one week in the year does not become an excuse for failing to work and pray for unity during the rest of the year).

D. Inclusion in worship on all possible dates (January, Pentecost, etc.)

2. Preparation of material

A. By local communities, involving a variety of groups.

B. Pay more attention to:

1) communities in the third world;

2) regions where there is little or no celebration of the Week of Prayer;

C. Give greater freedom to local groups.

3. Themes for the week

A. Link the Week of Prayer to major Faith and Order studies.

B. Include the Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women.

C. Link the Week of Prayer with the Ecumenical Prayer Cycle.

Group II Report. The Week of Prayer

1. The group refers to what is said about the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (WPCU) at the meeting of the Commission on Faith and Order in Stavanger 1985 (report, pp.222-25) and at the meetings of the Standing Commission in Madrid 1987 and Boston 1988 (the respective minutes, pp.70-71 and 86-87).¹ We quote from the Stavanger report: "It is very important that morning and evening worship at Faith and Order meetings should be thoroughly prepared, and we suggest the use of the EPC (Ecumenical Prayer Cycle)² at such meetings. We recommend that a half-time staff position might be created within Faith and Order to look after spirituality in general, the devotional life of Faith and Order meetings, and in particular the worship at the coming world conference" (pp.224-25).

2. In the group discussion we shared some experiences from the WPCU in different churches, and emphasized fellowship in prayer as a means for promoting Christian unity at each place. With special address to the Standing Commission the group would underline the following concerns for the WPCU:

- 1) To encourage a broader and more imaginative local adaptation of WPCU materials, without losing the theological orientation and style of the official materials. It was a wish in the group to have better guidelines for such local preparation.
- 2) To stimulate the churches to reflect on how the WPCU can play a central role in local ecumenical involvement and activities throughout the whole year, and not be limited to eight days.
- 3) To focus upon the use of WPCU materials together with the new edition of the Ecumenical Prayer Cycle (*With All God's People*, Vols I and II) for common service projects, theological education and ecumenical dialogues. It is a Christian obligation to try to reach a living and constructive interaction between prayer and theology.
- 4) To strongly encourage a greater participation and involvement of persons from the third world in the planning and preparation of WPCU themes and materials (that would, of course, require additional funding).
- 5) To have in mind the relationship between the WPCU and the World Day of Prayer, especially with regard to content and timing.
- 6) To make contact with the World Evangelical Alliance in order to discuss the possibility of a merger between the two prayer weeks. If

that is unachievable today, the group would point to the importance of co-ordination and collaboration between the two weeks of prayer to avoid any direct competition between them on the local level.

- 7) To prepare a booklet on the theology of prayer which can be used as a basis for the WPCU.
- 8) Some members of the group suggested that it might be of help to seek more theological clarity in the relation between prayer and meditation.
- 9) Concerning different forms of interfaith prayer, theological reflection and evaluation is needed. But the group is not of the opinion that priority should be given to initiating a separate study within this area today.

NOTES

¹ Thomas F. Best ed., *Faith and Renewal*, Faith and Order Paper No. 131, Geneva, WCC, 1986; *Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Commission: 1987*, Madrid, Spain, Faith and Order Paper No. 141, Geneva, WCC, 1987; *Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Commission: 1988*, Boston, USA, Faith and Order Paper No. 145, Geneva, WCC, 1988.

² *With All God's People: the New Ecumenical Prayer Cycle*, Vols I and II, John Carden compiler, Geneva, WCC, 1989.

Plenary Discussion

The reports of the two groups were read by Torleiv Austad and Marthe Westphal.

Seven persons participated in the discussion. A careful consideration was urged of the proposal for greater co-ordination with the prayer week sponsored by the World Evangelical Fellowship. This would be not simply "a matter of dates", but would require some level of agreement in content. It was suggested that our action be "to make contact with the World Evangelical Fellowship to discuss the importance of co-operation regarding the Week of Prayer and to discuss the possibility of co-ordinating or merging the respective weeks of prayer".

Another proposed connection was with the Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women; here it could be that insights from the unity and renewal study could help in seeing prayer for the unity of the church in a perspective sensitive to

concerns of women (this would probably require a different type of preparatory group). Contact was also urged with the World Day of Prayer (whose name had been changed some twenty years ago to reflect an inclusive approach). Such efforts to place the Week of Prayer within a broader perspective should not, however, lead to the loss of its identity and contribution to the whole ecumenical movement.

It was emphasized that the preparatory group must also include participants from non-North Atlantic countries; but funding should be sought to support the programme as a whole and not exclusively for that purpose.

Commissioners were reminded of the essential importance of fasting and its traditional connection, going back to Christ himself, with prayer.

These two reports were voted upon together with those from the other groups on Faith and Order's ongoing tasks; the motion and plenary action are reported below (see p.198).

Bilateral and Multilateral Dialogues

Background Paper

A common concern of the WCC and Christian World Communions (CWCs) is the proliferation of bilateral dialogues since the late sixties. This has led to an extensive network of dialogues on international and national levels. Together with the multilateral dialogues they form an important expression of the ecumenical movement. There are at present about twenty bilateral dialogues on the international level alone. Several of these dialogues have achieved remarkable results, and some of the results have led to decisions of churches on national levels to move towards closer fellowship.

Faith and Order has been asked to follow the developments in the area of bilateral dialogues with the following aims:

- to assist in relating bilateral and multilateral dialogues in such a way that they can complement and enrich each other as expressions of the one ecumenical movement;
- to assist in relating the different dialogues to each other in such a way that a coherence between them is safeguarded.

Faith and Order has implemented this task by taking note of the themes and results of bilateral dialogues, involving many people in its own work who are also participants in bilateral dialogues, and sending observers to some of the dialogues. In particular, the Faith and Order secretariat has so far organized four meetings of the Forum on Bilateral Conversations (1978-85) under the auspices of the CWCs.¹

The Standing Commission in 1987 proposed to hold the fifth Forum in 1989 or 1990. The Central Committee of the WCC in 1988 also requested that consideration be given anew to developments of bilateral conversations. The CWCs agreed in 1988 that Faith and Order should organize the

fifth Forum from 19 to 22 October 1990 (in conjunction with the following meeting of the CWCs) in Budapest.

The CWCs suggested that the theme of the fifth Forum could be: "The Coherence of Bilateral Dialogues in Our Search for Unity: Our Concept of it and its Ecclesiological Implications". This theme takes up the suggestion to consider the concepts of ecclesiology, and of the unity we seek, in the dialogues. The Budapest Commission meeting should make suggestions to be transmitted to the planning group of CWCs for the 1990 Forum.

NOTE

¹ Bossey, Switzerland, 1978; Geneva, Switzerland, 1979; Glion, Switzerland, 1980; Bossey, Switzerland, 1985. For the reports of the first to third forums see *The Three Reports of the Forum on Bilateral Conversations*, Faith and Order Paper No. 107, Geneva, WCC, 1981; for the fourth forum see *Fourth Forum on Bilateral Conversations: Report*, Faith and Order Paper No. 125, Geneva, WCC, 1985.

Bilateral Dialogues — Multilateral Dialogues

WERNER LÖSER, S.J.

1. For over two decades ecumenical dialogues with just two sides taking part — the “bilateral dialogues” — have, both in number and importance, played a major role (where previously, especially in the work of Faith and Order, multilateral dialogue had predominated). In this process, of course, the question of the relationship between the bilateral and multilateral forms of dialogue in the ecumenical movement has arisen. Are they in competition with one another? Are the bilateral dialogues even “taking the place of” the multilateral? Or may it not be that these two forms of dialogue complement and stimulate each other?

Many ecumenists have been quick to appreciate what they had to do to ensure the progress and cohesion of the ecumenical movement: it meant seeing and treating the dialogues as complementary. But, since such an aim is not achieved automatically, they saw the need to bring together at one table all the elements which were contributing separately. Thus the Forum on Bilateral Conversations came into being. The first three Forums followed one another in quick succession: 1978, 1979, 1980.¹ In 1985 a fourth forum was held (Bossey).² A fifth is planned for the near future, e.g. 19-22 October 1990 in Budapest. The forums are held by the conference of secretaries of Christian World Communions, with the Faith and Order secretariat acting as sponsor.

2. Bilateral dialogues continue to be held. They take place at various levels: local, regional, continental and worldwide. Some have an official character, and others are the result of informal initiatives. Those churches which display a strongly marked confessional (i.e. dogmatic and traditionalist) character are, of course, most involved. For understandable reasons, those churches which have already united are reserved in their attitude to the process of bilateral dialogue. Reports and papers have also

been prepared and published in recent years. I mention as typical only three, which sprang from official dialogues which took place at international level, and in which the church to which I belong has taken part:

- “Salvation and the Church” (1986), the theme of the second Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission;
- “Faith, Sacraments and Church Unity” (1987), a theme of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches;
- “The Sacrament of Order in the Sacramental Structure of the Church, in Particular the Meaning of Apostolic Succession for the Sanctification and Unity of God’s People” (1988), another theme of the Joint International Commission.

3. Looking back over recent years it can now be said that what was feared — perhaps not unreasonably — at times in the seventies (in other words, that the process of bilateral dialogue might jeopardize multilateral discussion) has not happened. On the contrary, multilateral dialogue has acquired a surprising new topicality. The work of the Faith and Order Commission is proof of this. In 1982 the convergence document on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* was published. It is a classic fruit of multilateral dialogue, and has had an unprecedented response worldwide. Two other projects belong to the sphere of multilateral dialogue: “Towards the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today” and “The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community”.

Indeed, bilateral relations among the churches and confessions may be seen as one of the factors creating the conditions and the opportunity for the very kind of multilateral activities now taking place. Problems of limited range have been solved and new perspectives opened up bilaterally, and this is part of the setting in which the more recent multilateral ventures can take place and prosper. Also, bilateral dialogues point beyond themselves in that the possible solutions they achieve can be only outlined in the bilateral context, with a helpful stimulus then sought in the wider setting of multilateral dialogue. This means, for instance, that bilateral dialogues between churches which, for all their differences, still agree in adhering to the Western church tradition will have their scope for thought and action automatically restricted by this affiliation. Bilateral dialogues can be augmented by new insights if together, from their own individual starting point, they open themselves to the richer experience available from the history of the church during the centuries when the Christian world was not simply undivided, but was actually still united, East and West. This is best done in multilateral dialogue. Accordingly,

the statements on convergence which have emerged from the multilateral discussion on baptism, eucharist and ministry are inspired by the revival of traditions that were more vigorous in the Christendom of the first centuries than they have been since the breach between East and West. This means first and foremost examining the concept of God as Trinity and of the church as *communio*, integral to which are, in the field of worship, the centrality of the eucharist and, with regard to structures, an emphasis on the sacramental episcopal ministry. We might for completeness' sake point out that all this has an inward cohesion. The project "Towards the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today" is even more obviously inspired by the rediscovery of ancient church tradition; it takes the form of an explication of one of its supreme texts — the Creed of Constantinople.

So it is clear from all this that where bilateral dialogues naturally reach a point beyond which they cannot go, multilateral dialogues can once again open up new possibilities. But if the churches become involved in them in earnest, they must realize that in that perspective their traditional positions appear to be relativized. It is easy to see that this presents a serious challenge.

4. Reactions to this challenge will differ. This means, however, that what has just been outlined about bilateral and multilateral dialogue being complementary no longer describes the whole contemporary ecumenical situation. This is in fact far more full of tensions than it might have seemed in the past. We must certainly not overlook the fact that not all churches and theologians are able to assent to the results of the multilateral conversations. There is even a new trend according to which "consensus ecumenism", as the process and aim of multilateral dialogue is sometimes called, is discredited. In recent times — at least in Germany — a new expression has become current and is strongly held: one speaks of "communion in diversity". Thus the element of "diversity" is firmly on the agenda. Those who are now speaking about "communion in diversity" are thereby voicing their scepticism about any form of "consensus ecumenism". The aim of "communion in diversity" entails — as Harding Meyer has asserted³ — a detrimental departure from the serious business of working towards theological consensus. It is a model which, fundamentally, resigns itself to the status quo.

The opposite course is to hold fast to the ideal of church unity based on agreement on fundamentals. The "consensus" which is implied certainly cannot be achieved in just any fashion. For example, a consensus would be inadequate that was achieved by the simple surrender — albeit from

noble motives — of one's own distinctive features and a far-reaching adoption of elements from a source foreign to one's own tradition. The consensus that is able to provide a basis for a fellowship of churches, and sustain this fellowship, has to reach right into those areas where, historically and theologically, the barriers must be broken down. In this — as I said above — the separation of East and West plays a large part. This must be fully dealt with, but that is best done in multilateral ecumenical dialogues where the aim is to rediscover — in both theory and practice — traditions established by the church over many centuries and still capable today of forming a basis for church unity and sustaining it.

NOTES

¹ *The Three Reports of the Forum on Bilateral Conversations*, Faith and Order Paper No. 107, Geneva, WCC, 1981.

² *Fourth Forum on Bilateral Conversations: Report*, Faith and Order Paper No. 125, Geneva, WCC, 1985.

³ See *Ökumenische Rundschau*, 38, 1989, pp.200-207.

Group and Plenary Discussion

Group I Report. Bilateral and Multilateral Dialogues

1. We noted the importance of a constructive interaction between bilateral and multilateral dialogues. Both forms of dialogue contribute in their own ways to a better understanding between the churches and to their movements towards unity.

2. We realize that constantly repeated and new efforts are necessary to enable the bilateral dialogues to benefit from the multilateral ones and vice versa: the bilateral conversations may now gain not only from the current Faith and Order studies but also from the responses of the churches to BEM; conversely, Faith and Order may receive new insights from the bilateral conversations as well as from the intensive special studies which some traditions have undertaken over long periods of time.

3. We plead that careful thought be given to the tools which would facilitate the desirable give-and-take between all dialogues:

- the publication of reports on dialogues;
- bibliographies on conversations, including papers presented;
- thematic compilations of the results of bilateral studies;
- the use of the computer for storing and using information.

4. Discussing the proposed Fifth Forum on Bilateral Conversations, it was pointed out that this may not be the best time to concentrate again on concepts of unity; however, due concern for “coherence” should be followed up. It was suggested that the Christian World Communions consider a modification of the proposed theme, like “The Understanding of the Church Emerging in the Bilateral Dialogues: Coherence or Divergence?”

5. The concern for coherence includes the following questions:

- In talking with different partners, do the Christian World Communions maintain a coherent theological position?
 - Do agreements reached with one partner apply also in the dialogue with a partner of the partner? (“Are the friends of my friends my friends?”)
 - Is there coherence in a wider and, perhaps, more complex sense when in different bilaterals the same theme is looked at from different angles (e.g. “justification” in reference to the individual, community, sanctification, ontology, theosis, etc.).
6. Some specific suggestions were made for the Fifth Forum:
- In the treatment of the theme, church union negotiations should be taken into consideration.
 - Attention should be given to ethical issues.
 - It might be helpful to ask, which are now the proper questions to be put to dialogues?
 - Prior to the Fifth Forum, the Christian World Communions should be invited to inform the Faith and Order secretariat of their current dialogues.
 - What can we learn from an analysis of the reception of the results of dialogues by the churches involved? Which bricks have been produced for the construction of an ecumenical bridge? Which ecclesiological images have proven helpful? Where and why did dialogues run into an impasse? Which non-theological factors have helped or hindered a conversation? How representative of their churches are the participating theologians?
 - How can dialogue be initiated in those geographical areas where the walls between the churches seem to be too high?

Group II Report. Bilateral and Multilateral Dialogues

1. The group used paragraphs 2 and 5 of chapter III of the Budapest background papers [printed here as “Bilateral and Multilateral Dialogues: Background Paper”, see p.188] as a basis for discussion. Specific viewpoints were expressed but no particular disagreements emerged on the perspectives of this programme of Faith and Order.

2. Particular emphasis was placed on the exchange of personal experiences through participation in various national or international bilateral theological dialogues.

3. It was confirmed that such dialogues mutually enrich the traditions which the participants represent. At the same time it is realized that every bilateral dialogue presents its own particular problems which do bear negatively or positively on other dialogues.

4. It was noted that the problems on the agenda of international theological dialogues affect the national ones, even on the level of practical concerns (e.g. mixed marriages).

5. It was acknowledged that in both the international and the national dialogues the issue of ecclesiology is of central and even crucial importance.

6. It was clear to all that the contemporary dialogues on the national and international levels create a new situation for the ecumenical movement, which, in spite of the slow pace of its dialogues, cannot be overlooked.

7. The main problem in the development of the dialogues is the lack of readiness on the part of the official churches to sponsor or to accept the traditional and practical decisions put forward by these dialogues.

8. The continuation of these dialogues was judged to be necessary and it was recommended that they should be encouraged and co-ordinated by promoting the whole programme of ecclesiology.

9. Referring to the suggested theme of the Fifth Forum on Bilateral and Multilateral Dialogues, the group expressed that it is important and necessary to clarify what is meant by "coherence".

Plenary Discussion

The reports of the two groups were read by Günter Wagner and Vlassios Pheidas respectively.

Eight persons participated in the discussion. It was emphasized that the nature and results of dialogues differ according to their subjects, the status which they are given by each of the participating churches, and the consequences which are expected from them. Such factors should be considered by the Forum on Bilaterals.

The experience of some dialogues was offered as a contribution to the Commission's reflection. The Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue had shown that between "legitimate diversity" and "simple recognition" is a third option, the recognition of deeply-held but differing convictions. "Yes, but..." was often more useful than "all

or nothing”; and when one recognized truths mutually held but differently expressed, there was often more unity than had previously been realized. The Baptist-Roman Catholic dialogue had found “business models” (identifying “critical success factors” and “threats and opportunities” to the goals of the dialogue) to be helpful in keeping stock of its progress.

Several specific suggestions were offered. It is important to expand and deepen the participation of women in official dialogues. “Smaller” churches (it was said) such as the Mennonite and Brethren have also much to offer in dialogues, and here Faith and Order could help “in co-ordinating their desire to share their life and insights”. Faith and Order was also urged to find a place for dialogues with “indigenous” churches; this might require new methods emphasizing issues of life and witness rather than the academic discussion of “comparative doctrines”. The educational value of dialogues was emphasized, as was the importance of making them more widely known and appreciated within the churches themselves. For their part, the dialogues needed to take pastoral issues within the lives of the churches more seriously into account.

The two group reports were voted upon together with those from the other groups on Faith and Order’s ongoing tasks; the motion and plenary action are reported on the following page.

Plenary Action on the Three Ongoing Tasks

The six group reports (two each on the united and uniting churches, Week of Prayer, and bilateral conversations) were then voted upon in a single action. The plenary moderator put the following motion:

The Plenary Commission takes note of these accounts of the Wednesday afternoon discussion groups on the ongoing concerns. Although they have not been presented to or received by the discussion groups themselves, these notes are sent, together with the notes of the Plenary Commission discussion, to the Standing Commission for use as it judges appropriate, in developing Faith and Order's work on these topics.

The motion was approved unanimously and without abstentions.

Future Perspectives
for Faith and Order

Process of Reflection on Future Perspectives for Faith and Order

Following plenary presentations and debate on each of the five areas for reflection (ecumenical perspectives on ecclesiology, the future task of Faith and Order, the unity we seek, unity and mission, and the fifth world conference of Faith and Order), the Commission divided into working groups, one for each area. Each group produced a report on the basis of the background materials, plenary presentations and responses, and plenary discussion. The schedule of the Commission meeting had been adjusted so that each of the groups would have the opportunity to review and revise its report before it was presented to plenary.

Each of the five reports was heard, discussed and voted upon by plenary in turn. The respective motions and plenary actions are given after each of the reports.

This section includes two additional reports, one in the area of the future task of Faith and Order and one in that of the unity we seek. The nature of these texts, and their role in the Commission's work at Budapest, are explained at the appropriate points below.

The Nature and Mission of the Church: Ecumenical Perspectives on Ecclesiology

Background Paper

GÜNTHER GASSMANN

1. The proposal

It is proposed that the overall programme of Faith and Order work in the coming years should focus on “The Nature and Mission of the Church — Ecumenical Perspectives of Ecclesiology”.

2. Reasons for the proposal

The understanding of the nature and mission of the church has moved to the forefront of all ecumenical dialogues and encounters in recent years. It is increasingly being realized that many of the still controversial issues between the churches have their roots in different understandings of the church. The ecumenical efforts towards common Christian witness and service within and for the wider human community (e.g. the programme on “Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation” [JPIC]) also imply basic ecclesiological issues which have not been sufficiently clarified so far. Finally, the changes and developments in the contemporary world challenge the churches to reflect together on the identity and mission of the church of Jesus Christ in the history of God’s purpose of salvation for humankind.

More specifically, in terms of the mandate and work of the Faith and Order Commission:

- a) It was strongly felt that work on the present three major studies — BEM, apostolic faith, unity and renewal — was lacking a comprehensive ecclesiological framework which could provide coherence and inter-relation to the many ecclesiological elements in the three studies.
- b) The responses to BEM clearly indicate that many critical comments on specific points are based on different ecclesiological presupposi-

tions (cf. the elucidations and major issues in the BEM report).¹ Accordingly, a number of responses explicitly ask Faith and Order to undertake an ecumenical study on ecclesiology.

- c) Bilateral dialogues and many other ecumenical discussions increasingly focus on the understanding of the church. In serving the complementary relationship between bilateral and multilateral dialogues Faith and Order has to enter into this new thematic development.

3. Implementation of the proposal

Faith and Order has always been primarily concerned with ecclesiological issues. Thus, the proposal for a major programme on the nature and mission of the church in an ecumenical perspective would build on and continue earlier and present work. What is new is that this programme would not only deal with individual elements and aspects of ecclesiology, but would provide for a comprehensive ecumenical reflection on the church with all its major implications (cf. para. 6).

The purpose of the programme would not be to develop a detailed ecclesiological system or even an "ecumenical ecclesiology", but rather basic ecumenical perspectives of ecclesiology which could serve as an impetus for the renewal and enrichment of the ecclesiologies of the different Christian traditions and thus for their convergence in the movement towards visible unity. The relation between basic perspectives and legitimate diversity would, therefore, require special attention.

Theologically, as has been suggested, this programme could employ the concept of *koinonia* (communion, participation) as its overall ecclesiological framework. This concept finds increasing attention in ecumenical dialogues and general ecclesiological reflection. It seems to be able to integrate the different biblical images of the church and to provide a coherent framework for major ecclesiological themes such as the Trinitarian basis of the church, the continuity and unity of the church in time and space, the quality and inclusiveness of the new community in Christ, the local and universal dimension of the church, the relationship between the calling of the whole people of God and the ordained ministries, authority and structures of decision making in the church, the "marks" of the church, the church as a missionary community, the church as mystery and as sign and instrument of God's saving and renewing purpose for all humanity, and the unity of the church.

Methodologically this programme should start from the rich material which is already available from:

- biblical and historical studies;
- earlier Faith and Order work;
- present Faith and Order studies, together with the responses to BEM and the results of the discussions of united/uniting churches;
- suggestions of the Faith and Order consultation on “Ecclesiology: Basic Ecumenical Perspectives”, Pyatigorsk, November 1988;
- bilateral dialogues in recent years;
- ecclesiological perspectives from other areas of work in the WCC (e.g. JPIC, the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, Dialogue, the Programme to Combat Racism) and other ecumenical bodies.

A study on comprehensive ecumenical perspectives of ecclesiology would at the same time provide the framework for the ongoing work on the unity we seek, apostolic faith, unity and renewal, and the follow-up of a number of issues emerging from the responses to BEM. This study could be one element on the agenda of the planned world conference.

The goal of the study could be either a longer study document or a shorter convergence document. A participatory study process and such a final document should help the churches to express more clearly their already existing communion and to move forward towards the goal of a conciliar communion expressed in common confession of the apostolic faith, mutual recognition as churches, sacramental fellowship, worldwide solidarity and sharing, forms of common decision making, and common witness and service in the world.

NOTE

¹ Chapters IV and V respectively, in “Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry 1982-89: Report on the Process and Responses”, FO/89:10.

Ecclesiology: a Response

ROBERTA BONDI

There seems to be no question about the importance of Faith and Order doing further work on ecclesiology. All the three main documents we have studied together, as well as our discussions here, have made the importance of ecclesiology clear.

The prospectus for a study programme in this area suggests that we might profitably focus our work around the concept of *koinonia*, or communion; chapter V of the BEM report on "Major Issues"¹ further specifies that we look at *koinonia* from three perspectives: (1) the church as mystery or sacrament, (2) the church as gift of the word, and (3) the church as instrument, servant and sign of God's coming kingdom.

I would like to respond by testing whether focusing on *koinonia* will be a helpful way of working. I will do this by trying to state in terms of *koinonia* some of the questions of ecclesiological relevance to me (1) as a United Methodist from the USA, (2) as a woman, and (3) as a patristics scholar.

Let me say before I start that I am asking questions as a United Methodist, not from the perspectives of Wesleyan theology, but from the actual concerns of congregations trying to understand their neighbour and themselves on an everyday level.

United Methodist questions

My first question is most basic. United Methodists are very individualistic: we tend to think the church is a collection of like-minded individuals worshipping God in the same place, then coming together to socialize over coffee. Can the concept of *koinonia* help us enlarge our view of what it means to be the church in such a way that we can be less baffled by churches that are not basically individualistic? Clearly, yes.

My second question deals with authority. Being individualists in our particular way, United Methodists have trouble trying to think about what constitutes authority. How can we come to a common understanding of the authority of scripture, much less the authority of the witness of the Holy Spirit in the people of God through the ages? Does the concept of *koinonia* help? Yes. Another part of this question: United Methodists are scandalized by communions that would turn them, as United Methodists, aside at the communion rail on the basis of their believing the wrong things. Can studying the concept of *koinonia* help? I hope so.

The third question has to do with the limits of tolerance. United Methodists are a tolerant lot — to such an extent that it is sometimes pathological. At certain points, however, when we are confronted by another communion's violation of a principle of our conscience, a group whose teaching seems to us destructive of the Christian gospel, we do not know what kind of fellowship we are called to share with them. One example is some of the new groups that stress that wealth is a sign of God's favour. Can the concept of *koinonia* help here in the matter of conscience?

Concerns as a woman

My first question is simple. There seems to me to be a great gulf between Jesus' regard for women and the actual position of women in the churches throughout the centuries. Will discussing *koinonia* help heal the wounds of women and not cover them up? No, if *koinonia* is used to tell me, "but this is the way the community is and always has been"; yes, if the study also invites repentance and relinquishment, thereby making room for those who have been considered outsiders and unimportant.

My second question: If women and men share a common *koinonia* within the churches, does this mean that I should expect to live in that *koinonia* in the New Creation now, where the promise is that in Christ there is "neither male nor female" (Gal. 3:28)? Or should I accept that this will only happen in the kingdom? (I take great consolation from praying "Thy kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven".) That is, if we approach this problem from the standpoint of *koinonia*, am I going to be told that the ultimate evil is to disturb the *koinonia*?

Finally, and related to the preceding question: in many cases I am told that the fact that some communions ordain women stands as an obstacle to union with churches which do not. Women like me, who support the ordination of women, do so because of (a) our theological understanding

of what it means to be the church, and (b) what we hear as the call of the Holy Spirit. Insisting upon ordination is a deep matter of conscience; we cannot understand why we are sometimes blamed, even by our own communions, for causing brokenness in the church and treated as though it is a matter of our own selfishness. Can focusing on *koinonia* really help women talk to those who regard us as self-seeking Jezebels, unwilling to set aside petty concerns for the good of the church? Can discussing *koinonia* help? I worry that it may not, if the discussion of *koinonia* is conducted only under the three types laid out at the end of the BEM report.

Patristic questions

I have two patristic questions which I will ask and treat together because they are so inter-related. They are, first, how do we reclaim the period of the early church, at least up through the time of the council of Chalcedon in 451, for the whole church as our common treasure? Second, how can we come to be willing to fight for the right of all the communions to make use of these patristic treasures in diverse ways?

I have a perception that we all have agreed tacitly that the main business of the early church was the “hammering out of doctrine” by church councils made up of bishops and archbishops. Part of the trouble with such a view is that it is not true. The rise of monasticism was another major portion of the contribution of the patristic church to the church through the ages. The development of monasticism was a kind of witness against patterns of dominance and subordination both in ancient society and in the church. It was also a witness over against fourth-century society’s distorted attitudes towards the owning of property.

This is the other part of the trouble with presenting the development of doctrine as the main business of the patristic church: it encourages those communions which think of apostolic faith in terms of witness to hand over their own claim on the early church to those communions who claim it as “theirs” in a special way. But this is dreadful. It cheats us all of the riches of the witness of the early church to Christian life that would illumine and breathe life into the very doctrine that is articulated in the Nicene Creed. It also cheats us out of our right to argue about the use, as well as the original meaning, of patristic texts.

An example we must be able to discuss: apophatic theology and the question of naming God. Why should it close the matter to say that the fourth-century fathers would “be appalled” at the way some of us make use of their own principle that all names of God have a provisional

element? Why can we not take patristic principle to critique patristic practice, in order to further our own modern theological reflection?

If all we who are Christian belong to the same family, it is one in which we share the same grandparents, but whose parents (the founders of our individual communions) grew up in different cities without intimate knowledge of their brothers and sisters. How can we, the cousins, find each other? There are many ways, but one way closest to my heart is through meeting together in our grandparents' house, which is the early church, to get to know them. The early church is not a set of doctrines; it is our people, from whom we have received a living faith expressed in doctrine, creed and symbol.

Who are some of these people? Perpetua, who suffered martyrdom so bravely, who loved her little baby and pitied her old father who cried for her when she could not abandon her faith; Irenaeus, who loved creation; Origen, who said that God comes to each of us differently according to our need; brilliant and good Macrina who taught her brothers, Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, theology and who founded and led a monastic community composed of herself, her female relatives and servants; Moses, the Egyptian monastic from the Sudan, who refused to judge or condemn anybody; St Anthony, who said, "our life and death is with our neighbour; whoever wins the neighbour wins Christ; whoever loses the neighbour loses Christ". Perpetua, Irenaeus, Origen, Macrina, Moses, Anthony: crotchety, lovable, often difficult, very often disagreeing even on basic theological tenets. Can talking about *koinonia* help us answer my two patristic questions? I do not know.

Conclusion

Now at the end let me stand back for conclusions. What conclusions can I draw from my own comments? Basically two. First, that there is indeed a lot more work that Faith and Order needs to do on ecclesiology. Second, that whatever work we do, we must be careful not to start or proceed by choosing, as a focus, *koinonia* as understood in the three ways presented in the BEM report, and then writing out all questions that do not fit into these categories as "hostile" or "unimportant". If the concept of *koinonia* be thereby exclusive, it will negate the very generosity of the gospel out of which we live.

NOTE

¹"Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry 1982-1989: Report on the Process and the Responses", draft text, FO/89:10.

Suggestions for a Plan of Study on Ecclesiology

JOHN (ZIZIOULAS) OF PERGAMON

Introduction

Ecclesiology is a subject which is paradoxically both omnipresent in ecumenical theological discussion and at the same time absent from it. It is present everywhere, because there can hardly be any discussion of problems pertaining to church unity without an implicit or explicit reference to the nature of the church. And it is absent from the agenda of ecumenical discussions because no attempt has been made so far to see to what extent there is convergence or divergence among the churches taking part in the ecumenical movement concerning their views on what the church is. The by-now famous Toronto statement of 1950 has provided for the churches a convenient means of avoiding any attempt to agree on the matter, since this statement allows each church to keep its own view of what the church is while co-operating with the other churches in the context of the World Council of Churches.

Recent developments in ecumenical discussions, however, have made it increasingly evident that the study of ecclesiology cannot be postponed for too long. While the Toronto statement remains still valid and useful in allowing the churches to participate in the ecumenical movement without prejudice to their ecclesiologies, studies such as BEM, apostolic faith, unity and renewal, and so on, have made it clear that any convergence on these matters requires a clarification of what we mean when we speak of the church. It is not surprising, therefore, that many reactions by churches to BEM, including that of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, call for a study of ecclesiology within the framework of Faith and Order. Such a study would not only facilitate the promotion of BEM and other projects of

Faith and Order, but also bring its multilateral work into line with what is taking place on the bilateral level of conversations, where the subject of ecclesiology occupies a central place (see the Roman Catholic-Orthodox, Anglican-Orthodox, Roman Catholic-Anglican and other bilateral dialogues).

Such a study of ecclesiology could take various forms. What is being proposed here is to deal with it not in the form of an attempt to produce a systematic ecclesiology, but rather to work on *basic perspectives* of ecclesiology. Such a method would still allow for diversity among the churches, while placing the entire subject in the broader context of a common confession of our faith, thus bringing it into line with other areas of Faith and Order work.

In this case, what could be the content of such a study on ecclesiology? What are the perspectives in which the church can be placed? This brief presentation is aimed at offering some suggestions on this matter.

The question of the “identity” of the church

When we speak of the church we refer to a reality (an entity or “being”) which cannot be defined in itself but only in relationship to something else. From the very beginning, when the term “ekklesia” made its appearance in the Pauline letters it was accompanied by the genitive “of”, and this basically in two ways: it was called the church of God (or secondarily, of Christ) and it was also called the church of a certain place (of Corinth, of Salonika, etc.). This observation is significant in that it points clearly to the *relational* character of the church’s being. The church cannot be conceived in isolation; it can be defined only in relationship.

Now, the same observation helps us define more concretely this relational character of the church. By being described as “the church of God” (or “of Christ”) the church is placed in the perspective of a relationship with God. We cannot understand what the church is without somehow relating it to God’s being. And by being described as the church of this or that place it is brought into relationship with the actual realities of the world, both in its material and in its social existence (for a city represents both of these aspects of existence).

This double perspective, in which the church’s identity is placed already in the Bible, must become a basic one in our study of ecclesiology. An attempt to analyze it further can lead us to the following observations.

The church in its relation to God

1. The church as an expression of God's purpose for his creation

The expression "church of God", in its interchangeability with that of "church of Christ", points to an understanding of the church as drawing its identity from the mission it has to perform in God's overall plan for his creation. It is against this background that we can associate the church with the idea of the people of God, Israel. By being the people of God, Israel is defined simultaneously as an entity belonging not to itself but to God, and as a way of realizing God's "economy" for the entire world. This places the church in an eschatological perspective. Its true identity is finally realized and revealed only in the end of time. Instead of speaking of the church as an instrument serving God's purpose during the interim period between the beginning and the end of history, the expression "church of God" should be understood as pointing to its association with the final act of God. Such an eschatological perspective can bring our study into close relationship with the idea of the church as the "mystery" of God hidden before all ages in his will, and as the "sign of the kingdom".

2. The church as a reflection of God's way of being

The expression "church of God" tells us something about its identity not only in relation to God's activity (his "economy") but also his eternal way of existence. The demand that we should be as God is (Γίνεσθε οὖν οἰκτιρόμονες, καθὼς καὶ ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν οἰκτιρῶν ἐστί, Luke 6:36) and that we are called to be "partakers of divine nature" (Θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως, 2 Pet. 1:4) applies above all to the church. Ecclesiology cannot function without *theologia*, i.e., without reference to God's own being. By making us through baptism "sons of God" in and through our incorporation into the "only begotten Son", and by offering us participation in God's life through the holy eucharist, the church reveals itself as the place where God is present not only through his word and action but also through his very being.

It is at this point that Trinitarian theology becomes a *sine qua non conditio* for a study of ecclesiology. The fact that God reveals to us his existence as being one of personal communion is of decisive importance for understanding the nature of the church. This must be understood in two ways. In the first place it tells something about the ground of the church's being, which can be no other than the Triune God — it cannot be any form of "natural" or creaturely communion, but the communion

between the Father, the Son and the Spirit, as it is offered to us in Jesus Christ. And secondly it tells us something about the character of the church's being, which cannot be one of individualistic isolationism, but of personal relatedness. In other words, the fabric of the church's being is communion. This is a truth that decides finally whether a particular church is "the church of God" or not. Communion must be made into a key concept in our study.

The church in the light of the idea of communion

If it is placed in the light of this idea, our study on ecclesiology can offer us an overall perspective in which the following particular aspects of ecclesiology can be tackled.

1. The place of the church in the continuous history of salvation in time

The question of the church's continuity in time is a crucial one in ecclesiology. The fragmentation of time and its division into past, present and future, which is a sign of the brokenness of our fallen existence, applies to the church's being, both in the form of sharing in the world's tragic existence exemplified in suffering, rejection and above all death, and in the form of transcending this tragic division caused by these factors. The church must have some access to a means of unity in time, or else its character as a reflection of God's being, as the sign of the kingdom, and so on, would mean nothing. What in classical ecclesiology has been called "apostolic succession" must be placed in the perspective of a communion in time. Such a communion would not only bring forth the need to take seriously continuity in time but also liberate such ideas as "apostolic succession", "tradition", and so on, from legalistic and formalistic connotations that may have rendered convergences in ecclesiology difficult in the past.

2. The church's unity in space

Here again the idea of communion can be of decisive importance. The relation between "local and universal" in ecclesiology has become a central issue in our time. The understanding of the unity of the church on the universal level as one of a communion of churches is gradually replacing pyramidal notions of ecclesiology, as well as views of the church universal as being an "addition" of local churches. In all this discussion a decisive role is being gradually assigned to the relation between the "one" and the "many" — an idea that was proposed some years ago as an instrument of dealing with the problem of the relation

between "local" and "universal" in ecclesiology. If the unity of the church in the world is understood as "communion of churches", a perspective may be offered in which to place problems such as primacy, conciliarity, etc., which are still dividing the churches.

3. The structure and ministry of the church

The unity of the church on the universal level is not the only problem relating to the structure of the church. An ecclesiology of communion would affect decisively also the structure and unity of the local church itself. If each local church is called to be an event of personal communion, a reflection of the way in which God himself exists as Holy Trinity, it must be understood in the first place not as a sum of individual believers, but as a *community* organically united in one body. Here the expression "body of Christ" receives particular significance in ecclesiology and deserves special study. All ministries within that body must exist in interdependence and no one can say to the other "I need you not" (1 Cor. 12). Ministries exercising authority over others must also be conceived in the same spirit of communion. The ministry of episcopo will have to be studied especially in such a perspective. The laity must also be placed in the same perspective, and the proper place of notions such as hierarchy, leadership, magisterium, church discipline, and others must be seen in that context.

Equally, teaching, preaching, worship and sacramental life, as essential marks of the life of each local church, must be considered in the same light. None of these can be exercised without somehow involving the entire body of the church. How can specificity of ministry be reconciled with unity? How can unity and diversity co-exist? The notion of communion, properly understood, may be of help in answering these questions.

4. The relation of the church to the world

We have already noted the significance of the expression "the church of a certain place". Ecclesiology is bound up with the locality and geography. The identity of the church (the genitive "of") involves a relationship with the whole place in which the church is found. What kind of relationship is this? Is it one of identification or of opposition? What are the marks of the church in relation to the world? To what extent does the church partake of the world, and to what extent does it stand over against it? Here the meaning of baptism as a means of demarcation between church and world emerges. The church's involvement in the problems of the world also forms part of the same problematic. Missionary activity

has also to be examined in the same light. Can a mission be exercised in a spirit of communion with the world or should it be done in the form of a confrontation with it? (Here the problem of inculturation becomes crucial.) And how can the dialectical balance between church and world be maintained in an ecclesiology of communion?

5. *The qualitative catholicity of the church*

The church as a community proclaims and manifests a communion qualitatively different from any idea of communion that the world knows. Partly as a result of its being rooted in the life of the Holy Trinity and partly due to its being a sign of the kingdom, the church must be the place where divisions are transcended no matter how deeply they may be rooted in the physical or social world in which the church exists. Thus no division of age, sex, race, social status, profession, etc., can remain unhealed in the church. An ecclesiology of communion must strike the right balance between unity and diversity so that the overcoming of divisions may not result in the disappearance of diversity. The subtle distinction between division and diversity is going to play a decisive role in establishing the concept of catholicity in an ecclesiology of communion.

Theological tools in working towards an ecclesiology of communion

1. *Trinitarian theology*

If the above-mentioned subjects are going to be treated properly, it would be necessary to agree in the first instance on the understanding of God as Trinity. The study on apostolic faith can be useful in this respect. Particular attention must be given to questions such as the unity of God and the way it is safeguarded in Trinitarian theology (through the "substance" or through the "person" of the Father?); the concept of *perichoresis*; the relatedness and uniqueness of the Trinitarian persons; the ek-static movement (love) of God both within the Trinity and *ad extra*, and other aspects pertaining to the idea of God as communion.

2. *Christology and pneumatology*

Here the right balance between these two branches of theology becomes decisive. An ecclesiology of communion must be Christologically based, yet this Christology must be conditioned pneumatologically in a constitutive way. Both the incarnation and the resurrection of Christ take place "in the Spirit". The person of Christ — and therefore his body,

too — is constituted as a being of communion. The church as the body of Christ — both in the incarnational sense and in the eschatological one — is not first established Christologically and then animated by the Spirit, but exists as the “communion of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 13:13) from the very start. The implications of this are beginning to emerge clearly in present-day ecclesiology, and must be utilized in the proposed study.

3. Eschatology

Here we must be prepared to abandon the old view that eschatology does not relate to ecclesiology, and be prepared to make it into a decisive tool in our study. The church as a communion must reflect not the world as it actually is, but the world as it *will* be in God’s kingdom. Without such a dimension any study of ecclesiology will not differ essentially from a sociological study of the ecclesial community. Communion is a notion common to both the church and the world at large. The qualitative difference between these two notions of communion cannot be established without the help of these three theological tools, namely Trinitarian theology, pneumatological Christology and eschatology.

Conclusion

These are but suggestions of a very general kind to indicate some of the issues that an ecclesiological study may involve. They neither exhaust the immense richness of the subject nor claim finality, but are offered simply as material for discussion by the Commission.

Group Discussion, Plenary Discussion and Plenary Action

Group Report. Ecumenical Perspectives on Ecclesiology

1. Following a thorough discussion based on the suggestions of the background paper (see p. 202 above) and of various points of view on ecclesiology, expressed at this conference, it was finally agreed that:

- a major study on ecclesiology is needed;
- which should integrate the ecclesiological content and implications of Faith and Order and WCC work thus far (especially the studies on “Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry”, “Towards the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today”, the “Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community”, the studies on “The Unity We Seek”), as well as the fruits of bilateral and other ecumenical discussions;
- which should not aim at a comprehensive ecclesiological statement; but
- concentrate on basic perspectives of unity and diversity and derive from these perspectives its themes and methodology.

Perspectives

2. With regard to unity it was agreed that common perspectives should be specified and explicated. Here the notions of the church as the body of Christ, the temple of the Spirit, the people of God, the kingdom of God and the covenant, could serve as starting points for exploring the biblical and traditional Christian understandings of the relation of the Trinity to the church. Such a study should include the rich variety of biblical imagery and could be linked to the useful notion of *koinonia* which has an

overarching signification and could be variously assessed. Furthermore, it should provide the basis for challenging our different ecclesiologies in so far as they are divisive, and provide a richer perspective for the mission of the church in today's world.

3. With regard to diversity it was suggested that the future study should include the thorough evaluation of what is held to be of particular importance by the different Christian traditions, not only the old and historic ones, which are more or less represented in Faith and Order, but also the newer ones (such as those connected with the independent churches of Africa, the base communities, the evangelicals, the ecclesiological concerns of the Pentecostal churches, feminist, liberation and so-called people's theologies, etc.).

Themes

4. As to the content and themes of such ecclesiological perspectives, it was felt that the study should concentrate on the questions of the origin, the present reality, and the future of the church, paying due attention to the Trinitarian character of God's saving work, to the human quest for salvation, and to the situation of the church in a secularized context.

5. As to the origin and source of the church, particular concerns were expressed with regard to:

- the biblical understanding of the church;
- the link between Christology, pneumatology and ecclesiology;
- the sacramental and eucharistic nature of the church;
- the relationship of the church and the kingdom of God.

6. As to the present reality of the church — which might be called a reality *Zwischen den Zeiten* — the study should pay attention:

- to the ecclesiological role and significance of all the members of the church and especially of the laity, both in the church and in the world;
- to the sociological and historic dimension of the church, especially within the challenging context of modern secularism;
- to the historical ecclesiological heritage which still divides us, but could also enrich us;
- to the problems of ministry still remaining after BEM;
- to the ordination of women;
- to the local and universal dimensions of the church;
- to the church as a communion of communions;
- to the issue of teaching authority, and of authority in general;
- to the tasks of mission and evangelism;

- to the ecclesiological perspectives of united and uniting churches;
- to the ecclesiological meaning of local ecumenism;
- to the implicit and explicit challenges to traditional ecclesiologies by various modern movements, like democracy, emancipation, human rights and liberation movements, etc.

As to the future of the church emphasis should be laid:

- on the relation of the church and the kingdom of God;
- on the goal of unity and its diverse models;
- on the missionary nature of the church.

Methodology

7. With regard to methodology it was thought appropriate to employ both convergence and contextual ways of exploring ecclesiological data and issues. Though the method of comparative ecclesiology would no longer be fruitful, it was felt necessary to listen carefully to the rich diversity of ecclesiologies, both in the New Testament, and in subsequent history including our own. The programme of the study should not prejudge its outcome in any of its themes or perspectives.

Plenary Discussion and Action

The report on “Ecumenical Perspectives on Ecclesiology” was presented by Julia Gatta.

The discussion included ten persons, many of whom raised substantial questions about the paper. It was said to lack both focus and specific programmatic proposals; nor had it addressed the original goal of the proposed project, to show the interaction and converging lines of the present three major Faith and Order studies on baptism, eucharist and ministry, apostolic faith, and unity and renewal. Some criticized the distinction made between “classical” and “contextual” approaches — all theological positions, including those sometimes called classical, originated in some particular context — while others called for a more careful accounting of the causes for the divisions of the churches, including those “cultural, national and social reasons” which have an impact upon ecclesiological reflection. More attention to the concerns raised in BEM, and to the question of the kerygmatic nature of the church, was called for. It was pointed out that ecclesiological reflection

“surfaces methodological problems”, and that any study should begin with a consultation specifically on methodology.

For some the diversity of viewpoints and proposals in the paper seemed inevitable, and indeed valuable in revealing “the real ecclesiological situation” within the WCC and in attempting “to be realistic about unity and diversity”.

Others called for realism about the proposed study process itself: to plan such a programme might indeed require more time than is typically available at Faith and Order meetings. It was clear in any event that further, careful preliminary work would be necessary.

The following motion was put by the plenary moderator:

That the Plenary Commission agree that a major study on ecclesiology be undertaken by Faith and Order, receive the report on “Ecumenical Perspectives on Ecclesiology”, and ask the Standing Commission to prepare a prospectus of the study with the help of this report and other materials.

This was carried with no negative votes and one abstention.

The Future Role of Faith and Order

WOLFHART PANNENBERG

I

In its eight decades of history the ecumenical movement, organized since 1948 as the World Council of Churches, has made a decisive contribution to changing the relations between the Christian churches. This is true not simply as to official relations between them but also as to the minds of their members. In the hearts of believers the feeling has grown up that they belong to a worldwide community of Christians, reaching out beyond confessional boundaries. Instead of irreconcilable contrasts and bitter rivalry between the churches a spirit of co-operation has made its appearance, based on this awareness that all Christians belong together as members of the body of Christ. But it remains unclear whether the awareness of Christian solidarity will be strong enough to overcome effectively, once and for all, the barriers which came into being as a result of the divisions of earlier centuries and which still separate the churches from each other today.

The visible unity of Christians — in the unity both of the apostolic faith and of a single eucharistic fellowship binding them all together — is an aim which does not need to be realized organizationally in a single, legally-binding constitutional structure which is uniformly applicable for all the churches, and intended to replace the present diversity of the churches which have grown up in the course of history. It is enough, rather, that the dividing walls of mutual excommunication should become so penetrable that they no longer block the breath of the Spirit and the life of the one faith which pulsates through the whole body of Christendom, seeking expression in common worship and in the love that binds all the members of Christ in the unity of his body, the love linked with the hope

that reaches out beyond this world but which — just because of this — can also illuminate the life of human beings in this world and give it a prospect for the future.

I have said that it is not yet clear whether the new awareness of Christian solidarity can lead to a renewal of Christendom within a single worldwide community. Many of the separating barriers are still intact, hardly touched by the changes in the ecumenical climate. There is no lack of voices here affirming that the aim of church unity with full reciprocal intercommunion is superfluous, and saying that co-operation between the churches, and between them and the other religions, is a sufficient contribution to overcoming together the challenges of our day with regard to peace, social justice and the integrity of the environment.

Secular pluralism is the voice which tenders such advice, both within and outside the churches. The secular world has no interest in the ecclesial unity of Christians. Religion and the Christian faith interest it only as means for motivating people for moral objectives, especially of a social and political nature. Secular pluralism does not know the deeper needs of the human heart for truth — a truth embracing the realities of this life as a whole and reaching out beyond this life. Irresistibly, the secularism of modern Western culture with its promises of a better life has altered, more or less fundamentally, the other old human cultures.

The churches of Christendom, especially those in the West, have been profoundly infected by this. Lack of interest in Christian unity on the part of this secular pluralism conjoins with a potent attitude of rigidity in the churches. The reasons for distrust and reservations here, in regard to the aim of the ecclesial unity of all Christians, are different. But the results are the same: co-operation of the churches is endorsed, but there is no hurry as to unity. Among ecumenical “stand-patters” in theology and among church leaders, the difference between Christian ecumenism and interfaith dialogue also becomes blurred at this point. Mutual respect and co-operation in the secular tasks of present-day humanity are necessary and possible in interfaith dialogue too, but church unity can be striven for only on the basis of the same faith, that is, between Christian churches.

Co-operation is necessary, whether in the relations between the churches or in relation to other religious communities. If successful, it is something we should not belittle. Among twentieth-century Christians, common concern for the problems of humanity has also been one of the roots of the ecumenical movement. From it came the Life and Work movement which, alongside Faith and Order and the International Missionary Council, became one of the three pillars of the Christian ecumeni-

cal movement. When Life and Work came into being, the idea of common Christian responsibility for peace and justice was still characterized by the dominant role of the Christian West in world politics at the beginning of this century. But the divisions among the churches made them unable to contribute to the ending of the political conflicts between those nations whose cultures bore a Christian imprint. Meanwhile the situation of common Christian responsibility for the world has fundamentally altered. We live in a multi-cultural world, no longer unilaterally given its character by the nations of the West — a West which though secularist is nevertheless the product of Christianity; and we have learned to see this change as “progress” in the sense of an opportunity for mutual respect on the part of the various cultures. It follows that dialogue and co-operation with the representatives of other religions have become increasingly important for Christian responsibility with respect to the world.

Yet sober realism demands that we should not overestimate the possible influence of the fellowship of Christian churches, and even of interfaith co-operation on the treatment and solution of the secular problems affecting the lives of people today. Cultural and political secularism, which has spread increasingly throughout the world, leaves only a little scope for the influence of religious organizations, unless as a means of confirming and reinforcing political and social objectives which have a purely secular basis. There is nevertheless a need for the common witness of Christians on these questions which affect the lives of human beings. But this can hardly be the pre-eminent aim of the Christian oikoumene; that aim must remain the unity of Christians in the faith and, consequently, the restoration of the ecclesial unity of Christians through the resumption of eucharistic communion between the various church families which have come into existence in the course of history.

Only in so far as the ecclesial unity of Christians is renewed can there be an increase also in the weight of their common testimony on the questions which affect people's lives. If this order of priorities is neglected in the World Council of Churches, or even if it just becomes blurred, then no one can be surprised if, conversely, the loss of Christian identity becomes a pressing concern. The danger then arises that efforts to respect and renew the identity of the Christian faith on the one hand, and ecumenical efforts on the other, may tend in opposite directions. Such a development would inevitably lead also to the destruction of the churches' ecumenical co-operation. The special task of Faith and Order within the World Council of Churches is to prevent such a development by keeping at the top of the ecumenical movement's agenda both unity in

the faith, and the restoration of the ecclesial unity of Christians on the basis of an awareness of the unity of the faith. Oikoumene is necessary precisely for the sake of the identity and authenticity of the Christian faith. There is no authentic Christian faith without the unity of Christians and without the effort to overcome the divisions between the churches.

II

From the beginning the driving force of Faith and Order has been recognition of the need for a new awareness of fundamental community in the faith, despite all the historical differences, and a consequent urgency for the task of restoring the ecclesial unity of Christians. In the agreed statements of Accra (1974) on baptism, the Lord's supper and ministry, and in the Lima convergence document of 1982 (BEM) which revised them, it was also possible to state jointly and explicitly the common faith of Christians on these themes, which are central to the worshipping life of the churches. These statements do not have the status of doctrinal pronouncements binding on the WCC member churches. Many of the statements are still controversial, as the reactions of the member churches and the course of the discussion within each of these churches since 1982 has shown. Nevertheless they do express, in a form representing the responsible views of the churches' delegates, a large measure of common agreement as to the faith. This is what gives these statements their effect — for many a surprisingly great effect. And this is why they are also heeded in bilateral doctrinal conversations between individual churches. As far as possible the framework established by the Lima statements has been adhered to, though this has not meant the exclusion of deviations on individual points.

The feedback in responses of the member churches to BEM is instructive for the question of what multilateral efforts towards a common understanding of the faith in the work of Faith and Order can achieve, and for seeing where the limits are as to what can be expected as a direct effect of this work. We must remain soberly and realistically aware of these limits. A breakthrough to a doctrinal consensus binding on the churches lies beyond the scope of Faith and Order. Nor is it to be expected as the direct outcome of the reception of our work by the member churches. Faith and Order can only prepare the way for such a consensus. The decisive steps towards it must be taken in the bilateral conversations between individual member churches, because the difficulties to be

overcome in every concrete relationship between two churches have their focus at more or less different points. The multilateral agreement expressed in statements and study documents of Faith and Order may nevertheless serve as a framework for doctrinal conversations between individual churches. The work of Faith and Order can make it possible for doctrinal conversations between the individual churches to keep in sight the movement towards agreement on the common faith throughout Christendom. Agreements on the content of the Christian faith between individual churches should always leave the door open for the greater community of faith uniting all Christians. For this the work of Faith and Order is of indispensable assistance.

What has been said about the opportunities and limits of the common understanding of the faith achievable in Faith and Order is also true for our efforts towards a common explication of the apostolic faith as expressed in the ecumenical symbol of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. This cuts across all divisions and cannot be dispensed with for the member churches' self-understanding. In the effort to achieve a common explication of the apostolic faith, the aim is to extend to the whole of the faith and of Christian doctrine the convergence gained in BEM regarding some central themes. Church unity is possible only on the basis of a consensus covering the whole of the faith, or at all events its substance — that is, what is necessary and sufficient for unity. An understanding of baptism, eucharist (the Lord's supper) and ministry is therefore not enough. Consensus is also needed on the Christian doctrine of God and on Jesus Christ as the Mediator of our salvation, and on how, as members of the church, we receive salvation through the Holy Spirit. In a body with as many different churches and traditions of Christendom as are represented in the Commission on Faith and Order, the sheer attempt to arrive at a common explication of this faith which will transcend all the contrasts separating the churches is breathtaking.

How far it is possible (where so many differences exist) to arrive at a common explication of the apostolic faith remains to be seen. Should the project succeed, the event will be of great symbolic significance for the whole of Christendom. But what relevance can a common explication of the apostolic faith by Faith and Order, if it eventually becomes available in a fully worked out form, have for the unity of the church? Such a document will be no more directly binding on the member churches than the Lima document on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. But it can provide them, should they wish it, with an instrument to support their own efforts towards the renewal of unity in the confession of the faith.

The common explication of the apostolic faith by Faith and Order can fulfill such a function because it is worked out, above all, as an explication of the ecumenical Nicene-Constantinopolitan symbol of 381. This symbol is recognized by the member churches as a summary of the apostolic faith of the church regardless of their divisions. Not all the member churches regard the text of the symbol as formally binding, but even those who do not do so recognize, in practice, the content of its statements. The common explication of the apostolic faith on the basis of this symbol therefore makes it clear in advance that it is the faith of the church with which this project is concerned. It is not a new formulation of the Christian faith, in contrast, perhaps, to the way in which the churches through the centuries have confessed and summarized the Christian faith. Rather it is a reminder that the separated churches even today can rediscover the unity of their awareness of the faith in this ecumenical symbol. This presupposes an adequate degree of common explication of the symbol, and the work of Faith and Order can, along with the reactions to it from the member churches, show the individual churches how far a common position can be attained or even assumed in what is necessary and sufficient for the unity of the faith.

This may be a long-term process, but even as we progress towards its goal I can imagine a concrete move of the churches arising out of a common explication by Faith and Order of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan symbol. Might not the member churches feel encouraged by such a common explication to affirm together solemnly, through their official representatives, that they, too, today understand the Creed of 381 as the summary expression of their faith, and to acknowledge themselves as united together by it? I could see such an act as the central event of a world conference for Faith and Order, in which the churches would be represented not only by "delegates" but by officials who could speak authoritatively for their churches. They would have no new doctrine to proclaim if they were to declare that together they recognize in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan symbol the summary expression of the faith of the one church and that they together confess this faith afresh. Much has been said in Faith and Order about what it might mean to make not only a common explication of the apostolic faith as summarized in the ecumenical symbol of 381, but also a common confession of that faith. By this I have always understood that, given an adequate measure of common explication of its content, the churches' representatives would one day solemnly utter the ecumenical symbol of 381 as the expression of the common faith of the church today, just as local congregations confess

their Christian faith during worship with the words of this symbol. I am convinced that such an event would be of great moment for interchurch relations on the way to full unity.

III

Closely tied up with the task of actually saying together and explicating together what is already the common faith, is the task of understanding what is meant by the term "church". Among the fundamental convictions of the ecumenical movement is the idea that unity in the faith and community among the churches belong together. We cannot have the one without the other. This has not always been the view. The ecumenical movement has considerably sharpened the awareness of this fact in Christendom. But what is to be understood, in practice, by "church" and "ecclesial community" in the light of the ecumenical situation today?

Faith and Order has spent decades of effort on this question. BEM has also contributed to it: baptism, eucharist and ministry belong to the essence of the church in its worshipping life; without unity of baptism, and without eucharistic fellowship and common, mutual recognition of ministries there can be no unity of the church. But this still does not say everything that has to be affirmed together about the interdependence of faith and church if the divisions of Christendom are to be overcome by a new manifestation of the ecclesial unity of Christians. The common explication of the confession — in the third article of the ecumenical symbol — that there is one church, must give a very thorough account of itself on this score. Yet that will be possible, in this context, only in a relatively limited way. It is the study on the unity of the church and the renewal of human community which deals in greater detail with the basis for the church's unity in the mystery of God's action in Jesus Christ as a saving mystery, the goal of which is the unity of humankind. From this standpoint, church and world are linked with each other for reasons of faith, and not simply from the superficial secular view that, among many other organizations, the Christian churches also just happen to be significant elements in the overall human situation. It is important that the relation of church and humanity should be discussed not just from this secular angle, but in terms of its basis in God's act of revelation. This is very important for our understanding of the reality of the church and the significance of the unity we seek.

What we have learned in ecumenical work has convinced me that on the way to unity the separated churches must still acquire a much greater understanding of the nature of the church — of how it differs from the world on the one hand, and how it serves the world on the other — in order to be able to produce a realistic vision of growing together into a federal unity of ecclesial community. I am not sure if it will be possible to deal adequately, and in the necessary detail, with all aspects of this task within the study on the unity of the church and the renewal of human community. How should the church be structured on the basis of its origin in the divine mystery of salvation? Should its local worshipping life and the community of local churches be governed by celebration of the eucharist linked to the proclamation of the gospel? How should this combination be described more exactly? How do other functions of church life, such as repentance, diakonia, education and doctrine, relate to this? In particular, how does the hierarchical structure of the ministry relate to it, as that structure has been evolved in the tradition from which all the churches derive, and as it has been retained in one or other stage of development in a good number of churches? Should all these and other functions in the life of the church be redefined in terms of eucharistic *communio*, to which proclamation of the gospel is conjoined? Although Faith and Order has indeed frequently made statements on the subject of the church, as far as I know there has been no coherent, comprehensive ecumenical investigation of these questions.

A second theme, closely connected with the question of the nature of the church and in need of detailed clarification, concerns the relation of religion and church to modern secular culture. This is no longer a question affecting only the Western industrial societies. Secularism has spread throughout the earth and most of the problems facing humanity in our day have their roots in it. As opposed to the forms of secular culture prior to the present day, modern secularism has freed itself from all religious ties. It has declared the religious confessions of individuals, and the differences between religions, to be a private affair and has denied their public relevance for the structures of society and its culture.

This development is understandable historically as a reaction of modern civilization to the destructive wars which arose in the seventeenth century from the division of the churches of the West. Thus there is a direct connection between the rise and the nature of modern secularism and the divisions in the church. It also follows, on the other hand, that the ecumenical process of overcoming these divisions cannot be without consequences for the way secular culture today relates to the theme of

religion, and in particular to Christianity and the church. At the least, it will not be possible, confronted by a form of Christianity which will have overcome both the divisions in the churches and the spirit out of which these divisions arose, to advance without qualification the old grounds for the detachment of modern culture from religion and the church.

In the course of modern history the churches have repeatedly been subject to the double temptation either of bolting the door on all modern cultural developments, or of accommodating their message and behaviour to the standards of secularized society and culture. The first of these two strategies leads easily to isolation from modern life and from those who lead that life. But the second, the strategy of accommodation, leads to dilution and to the danger of losing the specifically Christian message. The alternative would be, conversely, to assimilate culture to the Christian message and thus transform civilization and society. But that is not possible in a society which, being secular in its nature, sees itself as independent from all religion. Where the churches have opened themselves to modernity the dangers of accommodation to the spirit of secularism, to the relativizing of religious content, and to the breakdown of the authority of moral standards have consequently come time and again to the fore. Historically the problems associated with such accommodation were experienced first of all by Protestantism. But in the interval the maelstrom of accommodation and the struggle with its problems have become general.

It is easy to think that we can keep "in touch" with those who are in secular society through accommodating to it. But on the contrary, what matters is to make the religious dimension — from which secularism detaches them — available to human beings who are suffering from the biases and aberrations of secularism itself. Many people simply do not realize how much the secularism of modern civilization lies at the roots of their discontent and causes the feeling of alienation to spread, to the extent of irrational outbreaks against the faceless constraints of modern society or of a flight into drug-induced stupor or into the world of some superstition or other. If, in contrast to the bias of secularism, the theme of religion is fundamental to the health of the human psyche, and also to living in community, then this subject cannot be suppressed without the emergence of grave consequences, at least in the long run.

In humanity's present situation this is becoming increasingly clear. What we need, then, is a critical examination of the secularism of modern civilization, of its roots and its effects. I see an important task here for Faith and Order. A critique which tackles secularism and its conse-

quences may lead to the creation of a new awareness of the public task and function of religion and Christian faith. This is one way of concerning ourselves with the problems for living in modern civilization which cannot call forth the reproach so often made against those activities of the World Council of Churches which are devoted to these problems of living in modern society and are reactions to them — the reproach of becoming too involved in the world's list of priorities instead of concentrating on the themes of faith. Such a reproach would be missing the point regarding the function of a study on the secularism of modern culture. A critical examination of modern culture's secularism and its consequences is appropriate to demonstrate the irreplaceable and substantive relevance of the religious theme for human life. Were such an investigation and critique carried out by Faith and Order, this would be linked up with the demand for restoration of the theme of religion to its proper status, and recognition of that status, in the public understanding of culture. Here it must also be admitted that the division of the churches, together with their dogmatic antagonism and its destructive consequences for human community, has been the most important cause of the rise of modern secularism. This means that only if Christian divisions are overcome can the churches be enabled to affirm the truth of religion in the confrontation with secularism.

Secularism, in contrast to the churches, was for long correct in calling for a relativization of all the differences of religious confession. It was correct so long as the churches' awareness of the faith and the authority of their teaching ministry were marked by intolerance. Mutual intolerance contributed decisively to the division of the church, with all the fateful consequences for those nations whose origins were in the life-context of a culture determined by the Christian faith. Today, on the other hand, the churches have taken up the idea of tolerance into their own awareness of the faith. It is firmly founded in the Pauline assertion of the difference — characteristic of the present state of the Christian life — between the Christian's present knowledge in faith and the perfected knowledge which God's eschatological future will bring (1 Cor. 13:12). If Christians and those with ministerial authority in the church had always remained conscious of this difference, they would never have been able to feel possessed of the absolute truth in such a way as to effect its recognition through intolerance towards others.

The Christian faith does indeed rest on the absolute, definitive truth of God but the believer, and the community of believers, have always grasped this definitive truth only in a provisional form in history, which is

still incomplete. It is therefore possible to have different opinions about this truth both within and outside the community of Christians. Hence the command for tolerance arises out of the Christian awareness of the faith and of the truth itself. The conclusions drawn from this will certainly be different within and outside the community of Christians; for within the church, tolerance for different judgments about the content of faith cannot be allowed to suppress the community's consciousness of believing in the one Lord, and of the unity of its confession of him. But within the church itself, community — fellowship — in the one truth must be sought with tolerance and mutual love.

Mutual respect and tolerance for the differences which have arisen through the varied ways the churches have developed through the centuries of division is a condition for ecumenical dialogue, and must also be a condition for the unity we are seeking. On the other hand, this unity must not consider all differences in how the faith is understood to be immaterial, as happens in the situation known to secular culture as pluralism. The differences must be taken into account and mutually accepted in the consciousness of unity.

There is a close connection here between the task of restoring the unity of the churches and the question of the contribution the churches might make on behalf of people who belong to our modern culture. A community of Christians which overcomes the divisions of earlier centuries in the spirit of ecumenical tolerance and solidarity, will also possess the authority to demand public recognition of the substantive importance of the theme of religion for the life of individuals and for human community over against the secularism of the world civilization of today, without thus exposing itself to the reproach that this means lapsing into the religious intolerance of earlier centuries. *Faith and Order* could make an important contribution on the way to such a change in the public understanding of our secular culture — a contribution in which the question of the form of ecclesial unity for Christians would be closely bound up with the clarification of how the church relates to secular culture and society, and also to the non-Christian religions.

Response to Wolfhart Pannenberg's "The Future Role of Faith and Order"

MELANIE A. MAY

My reflections on the future of Faith and Order, and more particularly on Prof. Pannenberg's paper, began to cohere when I heard Günther Gassmann tell about the visit of Faith and Order officers with the Hungarian minister of state. You will recall that John Deschner spoke on that occasion about our work on church unity. The minister's response, according to Günther Gassmann's paraphrase, was that in Hungary they have had too *much* unity, that they now have to work on diversification, and that work on diversification will be difficult. And so I suggest that we in Faith and Order have also had too much unity, of a sort, that we too have to work on diversification, that we will find work on diversification as difficult as work on the visible unity of the church.

For even though the cacaphony of voices elicited by the method of comparative ecclesiology at Lausanne has not led to consensus, and only occasionally to convergence, a coherent conversation has nonetheless emerged. But this conversation is at once inclusive of wide confessional diversity and exclusive of yet wider diversity in the body of Christ and among all God's people girdling the globe. Continuing to be compelled by Christ's prayer that we may be one that the world may believe, we are called to a new challenge: not to the lengthening of our "laundry list" of issues, but to the transformation of our hearts and minds.

A first step towards this transformation is an acknowledgment of diversity: cultural and religious diversity as well as wider confessional diversity. Here I recall a comment made to the recent National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA delegation to the Vatican by professors teaching ecumenical studies at Roman Catholic universities in Rome. Their greatest challenge is, they said, not the confessional but the *cultural* diversity embodied by their students coming from around the world. We

in Faith and Order have hardly begun to deal with cultural diversity in relation to the visible unity of the church. Indeed we from the West are often blind to the cultural baggage we carry, for we simply assume it is normative. But our sisters and brothers from African, Asian, Caribbean, Latin American and Pacific contexts are actually aware of the cultural burden we have imposed on their own customs and climes. And the Western predisposition to presuppose a distinction, indeed a dichotomy, between culture and gospel, as between husk and kernel, form and content, even as encoded in our word "inculturation", will ever violate the integrity of other cultures seeking authentic articulation of the Christian faith. For it is surely an ecclesiological heresy to assume that the church of Jesus Christ becomes incarnate as African or Asian or Caribbean or Latin American or Pacific merely when white Western faces are replaced by the colours of God's rainbow, just as it is hardly honest to say that this Commission on Faith and Order has become representative of cultural diversity because it has "a new face", because the faces of people of colours are mingled with the white faces so familiar within the terms set for our work. What makes African or Asian or Caribbean or Latin American or Pacific churches *truly* incarnate as local churches is that they be baptized into their unique cultural heritage. So it will be with the church of Jesus Christ united.

This cultural diversity directs us towards religious diversity. For in many places the so-called "third world" is the non-Christian world. Even in North Atlantic countries, the old Christian heartland, Christians are now more than ever living with peoples of other living faiths as neighbours. Not only do we need dialogue with these people lest we bear false witness against our neighbours, inasmuch as culture and religion coinhere in many contexts, but as Christian churches in these contexts become truly local churches, interfaith dialogue will be part of their risky engagement with their cultural heritage. In this regard the Sri Lankan Jesuit Aloysius Pieris speaks about "a church humble enough to be baptized by its precursors in the Jordan of Asian religion and bold enough to be baptized by oppressive systems on the cross of Asian poverty".¹ Of course we can never confuse the distinction between interfaith dialogue and our specific conversation on church unity; but as we come to appreciate the diverse cultures to which we Christians are heirs, we must also not allow the typically Western philosophical and cultural assumption that Christian identity truly exists as an *a priori* always already given. Christian identity emerges as we turn together to our Lord who enunciated the way of losing one's life in order to find one's life anew.

It follows that many Christians live as minority groups in contexts of inter-religious tension that tempts violent tendencies. I suggest in this regard that the contexts from which Christians come are not simply, or even perhaps primarily, characterized by the values and views of modern secularism, but by the resurgence of religious life around the world. Although thirty years ago many scholars stated that religion would fade from the future secular scene, today indigenous religions (for example, the traditional sacred ways of Native Americans, in which Cardinal Francis Arinze, head of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, recently said that Christ was found)² are being revived, new religious movements are on the rise, and the so-called universal religions are growing.

Against this backdrop, Prof. Pannenberg's words about religious tolerance stand in starkly significant relief. But I want to suggest that religious tolerance is not enough, insofar as tolerance still assumes that "we" set the terms for "them", that we remain in a privileged posture. I want to suggest that we are called not to "tolerate", but to heed the Hebraic and later Christian injunction to offer *hospitality* to the stranger. On this biblical basis I want to suggest further that we are called to engage in conversation with the stranger: conversation that cuts across the cycle of claim and counter-claim, and so redeems relationship.

We are called also to work towards a wider and wider confessional diversity. In my context, the United States, the so-called "mainline" churches are being sidelined by churches of more evangelical and Pentecostal traditions. Moreover, the significance of the denominationalism which has characterized the American religious landscape is waning as more and more alternate organizations, often interdenominational or non-denominational, form around specific objectives. In Latin America and parts of Asia (the Philippines, for example), the church is being reborn in base ecclesial communities as well as in emergent independent Pentecostal churches. In Africa, indigenous, independent churches are being born at the rate of hundreds every year. Before many more years have passed, these churches will account for the majority of the world's Christians. The Commission on Faith and Order of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA has been blessed by the gifts brought to us by Christians from various evangelical and Pentecostal churches, as well as from the historic African-American churches. It is my prayer that this World Council of Churches Commission on Faith and Order may be so blessed in the future, thereby receiving the spirit whose face we newly wear.

As we entertain diverse peoples and places, persistent questions about the limits of diversity will press us anew. The Christian church has, of

course, lived with these questions for the nearly two millenia of Christian history. Earlier this century, against the backdrop of the German church struggle, the Faith and Order forefather Edmund Schlink stated the concern clearly and concisely:

The most important and decisive reason for the various limitations of the diversity possible within the unity is the concern to maintain the distinction between truth and error, between the church and the pseudo-church, i.e., the concern about the danger of apostasy.³

But I would like to add that the discernment of the limits of diversity calls for contextual sensitivity and, as Paolo Ricca said so powerfully, for love. For God did not speak a word from on high, but because of love for us and for the world humbly became one of us here on earth, became frail and finite flesh. As Christians, therefore, we are called not to make judgments about the limits of diversity by transcending them but by being transported into a context where the diversity of confessions and cultures, religions and races, is recognized, respected, indeed received as gifts for upbuilding a fuller, richer common life and witness.

Such contextual sensitivity, such love, is not new to the Christian church. For centuries the church has recognized that the eucharist, for example, signals something more than political, economic and ecological liberation — but never less. St John Chrysostom articulates this spirit:

Do you wish to honour the body of Christ? Do not despise [it] when [it] is naked. Do not honour [it] here in the church building with silks, only to neglect [it] outside, when [it] is suffering from cold and from nakedness. For [the one] who said, "This is my body", is the same one who said, "You saw a hungry one and you did not give to eat!" Of what use is it to load the table of Christ? Feed the hungry and then come to decorate the table. You are making a golden chalice and you do not give a cup of cold water? The temple of your afflicted brother's body is more precious than this Temple. The body of Christ becomes for you an altar. It is more holy than the altar of stone on which you celebrate the holy sacrifice. You are able to contemplate this altar everywhere, in the street and in the open squares.⁴

The words of St John Chrysostom make it clear that we may not wrest eucharistic fellowship from the concrete contexts in which we celebrate it.

Contextual sensitivity can strengthen Faith and Order's commitment to reciprocity in questioning and listening, in sending and receiving texts: a reciprocity vitally important for the future. Faith and Order has known about the integral connection between text and context for a long time.

Indeed, it may be said that all texts published by Faith and Order are already also context, having been articulated at conferences and consultations and often identified by the names of the places where these were held. The statement on "The Church, the Churches, and the World Council of Churches", for example, is far better known as the "Toronto statement". And, of course, we all know *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* as the "Lima text".

But as we live our commitment to the integral reciprocity of text and context, we are called to put questions to ourselves. For example, with regard to the "response to the responses" of the churches to *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, will we take the responses of the churches as seriously as the churches took the text? That is, will we respond magisterially or as a midwife? Responding magisterially, we would primarily correct the churches' misunderstandings of the text, clarifying its meaning with reference to what the text meant when it was written. Responding as a midwife, we would help give birth to conversation newly-created, as the text is loosed from its originating context and comes to life in diverse contexts. In other words, will we claim *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* as an already-completed text-in-itself, or seek the significations suffusing the text, which surface in multiple contexts? Will we relinquish the text that has already died to its originating context and recognize the text already risen to new life in different contexts? As Mary Tanner has asked us, will we contain *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* in a "comfortable oasis", in its originating context, or claim *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* in and for the life of the world, a world reverberating with the plaints of the poor and dispossessed?⁵ Correspondingly, as Paul Crow has reminded us so well, central among the questions with which the churches are called to wrestle are: Will the churches trust a deposit of Tradition coming through their own tradition, or entrust themselves to others in conversation, giving and receiving the irreducible richness of traditions for the upbuilding of a common life? Will the churches cling to their own authoritative point of origin, perpetuating their own particular traditions, or offer themselves for the sake of fuller ecclesial life? Will the churches receive abbreviated or abundant blessing?⁶

We can also act on our commitment to the reciprocity of text and context in relation to the apostolic faith study. As it is now conceived, the text of the study calls churches to think about "apostolicity" in terms of the content of the fourth-century creed and to accept an understanding of "apostolicity" apparently unalterably wedded to the fourth-century credal context: a very particular social and philosophical context in which

Christianity was Hellenized as surely as the Greek culture was Christianized — a context, moreover, that is not clearly articulated in the study. May we not rather begin with a wider understanding of “apostolicity” drawn from the churches’ own diverse understandings of what would be adequate for themselves and acceptable for other communions? May we not thereby begin an explication based on a widely inclusive invitation to the body of Christ incarnate in various contexts of God’s good creation?

At stake in the acknowledgment and appreciation of diversity is the credibility of the Commission on Faith and Order and the authority of the church of Jesus Christ. Unless we are willing to greet the cultural, confessional, religious, and racial diversity of our day, we can hardly hope to bear witness to a credible word or sign of unity. Ecclesiastical establishments may exist into eternity, but without contextual sensitivity they will be without authority.

There are other challenges that will press us anew in the coming years: for example, issues of ministry such as the representation of Christ, the Petrine ministry, and the ministry of all baptized believers, as well as an articulation of an ecclesiology able to stand alongside the doctrine of the Spirit and eschatological affirmation. These challenges, like the challenge of diversity, call us to a new identity as bearers of Christ’s image: an identity that calls us to offer ourselves and our traditions in service to one another rather than lord them over one another, thus following our Lord’s example of ultimate self-giving, an identity that calls us to live so that the whole of God’s good creation may be transfigured, may become unceasing praise to God the Creator.

NOTES

¹ *Love Meets Wisdom: a Christian Experience of Buddhism*, Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 1988, p.41.

² See the *National Catholic Reporter*, Vol. 25, No. 38, 25 August 1989, p.3.

³ “The Unity and Diversity of the Church”, in Reinhard Groscurth ed., *What Unity Implies: Six Essays After Uppsala*, World Council of Churches Studies No. 7, Geneva, WCC, 1969, p.34. Cited by Michael Kinnamon in his *Truth and Community: Diversity and Its Limits in the Ecumenical Movement*, Geneva and Grand Rapids, WCC and W.B. Eerdmans, 1988, p.13.

⁴ Cited by Tissa Balasuriya in his *The Eucharist and Human Liberation*, Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 1979, pp.26-27.

⁵ Cf. p.91 above.

⁶ Cf. pp.134-143 above.

Group Discussion, Plenary Discussion and Plenary Action

Group Report. The Future Task of Faith and Order

1. In general discussion it was recommended that in its future work Faith and Order should pay attention to the following:

- a) Emerging forms of unity in the world (e.g. new forms of unity being created by advertising, television) and how they challenge and inform our understanding of unity.
- b) What the widespread yearning for political democracy contributes to our understanding of unity in the church.
- c) More systematic attention to the whole complex of issues surrounding questions of culture and theology, and contextualization. In future work problems of methodology should be seriously addressed in order to integrate third-world issues and perspectives into Faith and Order work.

2. The following recommendations on specific topics were endorsed by the whole group:

Consultation on ministry

- a) We strongly recommend that as part of the proposed ecclesiology study, a consultation be held on unresolved ecumenical ministry issues, especially the ordination of women. This issue continues to represent a challenge in the ecumenical movement because there are churches which ordain women, churches which do not, and churches which are undecided. The effect of this plurality on Christian unity needs to be discussed and ways need to be found to prevent this plurality being a major stumbling block in ecumenical

relations and bilateral dialogues (e.g. Anglican-Orthodox; Anglican-Roman Catholic; Roman Catholic-Methodist, Old Catholic-Orthodox).

- b) Discussion of the ordination of women brings into focus a number of ecclesiological issues, such as understanding of ministry, authority, and tradition.
- c) The consultation should feature discussion on the representation of Christ in the ordained ministry, with a careful exploration of the apostolic tradition in order to discover appropriate hermeneutical principles for dealing ecumenically with patristic material and with the question "who judges the tradition?"

3. Charismatic/Pentecostal relationships

We recommend that:

- a) within existing studies — apostolic faith, unity and renewal — a place be found for attention to a study of spiritual gifts within the church;
- b) that there be a wider participation of representatives of Pentecostal, independent African churches, and renewal movements in the Faith and Order Commission and in its consultations;
- c) that Faith and Order be encouraged to collaborate on this issue with other sub-units such as the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism and the Programme on Theological Education which are already engaged in such relationships.

4. Ecclesiology

We recommend that:

- a) Faith and Order collect what has already been done on this issue by the WCC and confessional bodies;
- b) recognition should be given to new elements emerging in churches and non-traditional groups and to factors of cultural diversity;
- c) attention should be paid to the questions about ecclesiology in the BEM responses.

Plenary Discussion and Action

The report on "The Future Task of Faith and Order" was presented by Janet Crawford, who explained that the group had not sought to produce a "conspectus of studies" — that being the task

of the Budapest meeting as a whole — but to identify perspectives which had tended to be overlooked in our work, and new issues which could become important in the future.

Thirteen persons took part in the debate. There was general agreement that we should give more attention to “communities not presently engaged in the ecumenical movement”, particularly Pentecostal churches and charismatic movements, but also “non-traditional groups” engaged in Christian reflection and action but not officially part of the church. This would certainly raise significant ecclesiological questions. It was stressed that the involvement of persons from non-North Atlantic regions should be increased, and that the work of Faith and Order should be shared more widely (for example through regional consultations and closer contacts with the churches), “not trivializing but popularizing” its issues and results. These points were complemented by a call for study on issues of culture and contextualization.

There was extensive discussion of the proposal for a consultation on the ordination of women. We were reminded that “one of the main tasks of the apostles was to face and deal with unprecedented situations”; we should be open to the leading of the Spirit in this as in other areas, recognizing that this is not “an issue of Protestants against Orthodox or Roman Catholics”, for all churches face serious issues related to the full participation and opportunities for leadership of women. This work should be related to “a more general inquiry into the issue of ecclesiology”, and could well relate to the question of catholicity which had arisen in the discussion of the report on “the unity we seek” (see pp.257-261).

There were calls for serious reflection on Faith and Order’s methodology; it should, it was said, incorporate a more multidisciplinary approach, and would benefit from the experience of other ecumenical endeavours such as the bilaterals or the programme on JPIC. Several emphasized the need for more concrete proposals as to how this report might be put into practise — and not just in particular studies but in the work of the commission as a whole.

Early in the discussion, plenary had affirmed (by a vote of 26 to 19, with 5 abstentions) that points made in the discussion should be recorded for later use, but not incorporated into the text of the report.

It was moved by the plenary moderator that:

The Plenary Commission adopt the report of group II,* "The Future Task of Faith and Order".

This was adopted with one negative vote and no abstentions.

* * *

Statement from the Younger Theologians: the Process of Reflection

The Commission benefitted at Budapest from the presence of several younger theologians: John Cole, Midic Dobrivoye, Lorna Khoo, Konstantinos Kornarakis, Eleuthère Kumbu Ki Kumbu, Sandra Truex, Vibila Vuadi, Timothy Wengert and Flora Winfield (cf. the consultants list, p.240): They brought a lively, critical and supportive perspective upon both the issues tackled by Faith and Order and the process by which it works.

In the course of the meeting the group was asked by the officers of Faith and Order to draft a statement for presentation to plenary. It is included here in recognition of the fact — which became increasingly clear at Budapest — that the greater involvement of younger theologians must be an integral element of Faith and Order's future.

Statement from the Younger Theologians

1. We were very glad to take part in the meeting of the Plenary Commission of Faith and Order. Through our first experience in the Commission, we learned a great deal. The interventions demonstrated a spirit of listening and patience. The whole conference gave us opportunities to get to know other Christians deeply involved in the ecumenical movement, and at all levels we felt welcomed and were encouraged to participate fully in the meeting. We benefitted from the involvement in

* This topic had been designated as the second of the five "future perspectives for Faith and Order".

the discussions of the three documents and future work of Faith and Order.

2. We believe it is of the utmost importance to continue to include younger theologians in the work of Faith and Order at all levels of the ecumenical movement. Such a commitment will benefit both the theological enterprise in the church and the Faith and Order movement. We found particular benefit in the ecumenical and international make-up of our group, but we would strongly urge the Standing Commission intentionally to seek out younger theologians from younger churches, especially from Africa, South America and Asia.

3. Coming to an international meeting in a foreign country can easily disorient a newcomer; therefore we strongly recommend that *all* newcomers receive a well-planned and organized orientation from the Faith and Order staff. Such an orientation could include:

- a) background in the variety of Faith and Order concerns;
- b) introduction to methods for reading reports and statements;
- c) open and honest explanation of the ways in which decisions are actually made;
- d) information regarding the style, content and etiquette of interventions.

4. We also recommend that Faith and Order investigate the possibility of regional and international conferences for "younger" theologians which could serve to help orient them into the Faith and Order movement.

5. As part of the orientation process, experienced members of Faith and Order should meet with the new participants in a variety of forums (e.g., at meals, in small groups).

Plenary Action

The statement from the younger theologians was read to plenary by Sandra Truex. It was received with appreciation and with gratitude for the contribution which the group had made to the Commission's life and work at Budapest.

The Unity We Seek

Background Paper

In January 1987 the Central Committee of the WCC requested that Faith and Order undertake “a fresh consideration of the concepts and forms of the ‘unity we seek’ in the ecumenical movement” and prepare a draft statement to be submitted to the 1991 WCC Assembly in Canberra.¹ This statement should be worked out in continuity with the short Assembly statements on this topic adopted in New Delhi 1961 and Nairobi 1975,² and should take into account new developments since 1975.

The 1988 Boston Standing Commission suggested that the draft should also include:

- a description of the fellowship in the movement towards visible unity which we already experience and share;
- references to the implications of the process towards visible unity for the hopes and the renewal of the wider human community;
- references to insights from Faith and Order studies, bilateral dialogues, united churches;
- a consideration of the concept of “conciliar communion” (Pyatigorsk);
- an emphasis on the task: the necessity of unity — why?³

A group in Budapest should prepare a first draft outline for a statement. This should be discussed and revised in plenary. The draft should not be longer than two pages. After Budapest a small group should continue to work on the draft in preparation for Canberra.

NOTES

¹ World Council of Churches, Central Committee, Minutes of the Thirty-Eighth Meeting, Geneva, WCC, 1987, p.44.

John Deschner, "A Brief Overview of the Faith and Order Movement (ca. 1910-1989) and a Brief Selection from Faith and Order Documents", Geneva, Faith and Order, 1989. For New Delhi (Deschner, Document No. 15) see W.A. Visser 't Hooft ed., *The New Delhi Report: the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1961*, London, SCM Press, Ltd, 1962, p.116. For Nairobi (Deschner, Document No. 21) see David M. Paton ed., *Breaking Barriers: Nairobi 1975*, London and Grand Rapids, SPCK and Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1975, pp.60-62,63,66. For Bangalore (Deschner, Document No. 23), see *Sharing in One Hope: Bangalore 1978*, Faith and Order Paper No. 92, Geneva, WCC, 1978, p.243.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Commission: 1988, Boston, USA, Faith and Order Paper No. 145, Geneva, WCC, 1988, pp.117-118.

Some Reflections on Models of Unity

DIETRICH RITSCHL

The four of us on this panel have been asked to dream, on your behalf, some dreams or visions of the unity of the churches which might be achieved in the near future.

My task in particular is to provide some historical “footnotes” to these dreams. These footnotes will be about steps in the discussion on models of unity within the World Council of Churches, and especially within the context of Faith and Order.

It is important to note that these “models” were not, and are not, intended to provide an explicit concept of the church — that is, they do not pretend to be ecclesiologies. But they do contain, inevitably, ecclesiological elements, and some models appear to be favoured by specific churches with particular ecclesiological orientations. Thus the discussion of models raises implicitly some basic ecclesiological questions and issues.

I am proceeding from the following thesis: that ecclesiology is emerging as the most important theme for the WCC and for Faith and Order today. Here I will refer only to John Deschner’s opening address at this Plenary Commission meeting, as well as to the ten(!) consultations held within the programme on unity and renewal, and to the Faith and Order consultation on “Ecumenical Perspectives on Ecclesiology” held in Pyatigorsk, USSR, in November 1988.

Thus both the nature of the models themselves, and the recent directions of Faith and Order work, require that we subject the proposed models of unity to a careful ecclesiological analysis, explication and amplification.

The beginnings

The beginnings of reflections on models of unity lie in the pragmatic approaches to church co-operation which were explored in the Life and

Work movement already before the first world war, and up until the Stockholm conference of 1925. These focused on church contacts and sharing in the areas of mission, social problems in the cities, and peace.

But reflection on the nature and possible forms of unity was also, indeed primarily, found within the Faith and Order movement. Already at the first Faith and Order world conference in Lausanne in 1927 a call to unity was issued. It was still basically a pragmatic appeal, and did not as yet have a Trinitarian grounding. But — in a way that seems prophetic of our present Faith and Order work — it emphasized the importance of the common confession of the Nicene Creed.

Faith and Order carried this reflection forward in an important way at its second world conference in Edinburgh in 1937. There a confederation model was envisaged in order to enable the “co-operative action” of the churches. But the goal went far beyond common action, for intercommunion was declared to be a “necessary part of satisfactory church unity”. There was mentioned also the idea (which appears to be gaining renewed prominence today) of unity “by stages”. The conference spoke about various ways of visualizing unity, that is, in the forms of “corporate union”, “organic union” and “governmental union”.

Amsterdam (1947) marked an important development in that reflection on unity was marked by stronger theological reasoning, as shown in the very theme, “The Universal Church in God’s Design”. The starting point was the conviction that God has given the gift of union in Jesus Christ; unity is not our achievement. But the question was also raised, is the church a broken image of a heavenly prefiguration, or of the Trinity? Thus the issue of the “perfection” of the church entered the discussion. This meant that the constitution of the church came into view, but this was not dealt with in depth.

From New Delhi (1961) to Nairobi (1975)

The New Delhi Assembly explored the issue of unity under the leadership of Faith and Order. Although mutual recognition of churches was acknowledged as an ecumenical goal, it was affirmed that the church is not only local but universal — that there are not only churches, there is also the church. Here the Faith and Order statement was accepted by the Assembly. The key point was that more than mutual recognition was foreseen; a true and broader vision of unity was expressed.

At Uppsala in 1968 the church was proclaimed to be a sign of unity for humankind. The central themes of the Assembly included catholicity, diversity and secularization. These emerged in a dynamic and creative

fusion, through the Faith and Order Plenary Commission meeting at Louvain (1971) and the Salamanca consultation on “models” of unity, into the concept of a “conciliar fellowship” of local churches which was then articulated at the WCC Assembly in Nairobi in 1975.

Finally, the Faith and Order Plenary Commission meeting at Bangalore in 1978 noted three “requirements” for the move from a pre-conciliar to an ecumenical conciliar fellowship. These were:

- consensus in confessing the apostolic faith;
- mutual recognition of baptism, eucharist and ministry;
- structures for common teaching and decision making.

The present situation after Lima and the beginnings of the apostolic faith study

The period after the Faith and Order Plenary Commission meeting in Lima in 1981 has seen an important shift in the way that church unity is envisioned. It has been marked by a movement away from church unity:

- as mission;
- as co-operative action;
- as mutual recognition of churches (including ministries);
- as universal conciliar fellowship;
- as reconciled diversities;
- as communion of communions.

The new approach to unity follows from our agreeing on the constitution of the church as being rooted in and reflecting the communion of the Triune God, expressed through word and eucharist and in covenant between God and God’s people. On this basis we can expound an ecclesiology which is ecumenically capable of consensus, and which offers a framework for programmatic, pragmatic “models”.

In this it is essential to remember the fundamental importance of several factors: mission, the fact that the church is a sign of the unity of humankind as a whole, and the need for the church to stand in solidarity with the poor. In addition the eschatological perspective is basic to our understanding of the church and its unity.

If we base our search for unity on these principles, then our “models of unity” will be truly a universal conciliar fellowship — and this perhaps in combination with the idea of a communion of communions.

Finally the vision of unity must become vital and concrete at the local level; the “conciliar process” about which we dream and of which we speak must become, ultimately, a synodical process.

3. The Unity We Seek

The Unity We Seek

PAOLA RICCA

From the particular background which is mine, the background of a very small minority Protestant church in Italy, it would be easier for me to speak of the unity we do not seek — and there *is* such a thing as the unity which we do not seek. But we are now beginning to learn to seek unity, and I will try to say something about this difficult learning process.

The unity we seek is, first of all, the unity between apostolic faith and apostolic life. From the very beginning of the Waldensian movement in the twelfth century, the central issue which the Waldensians raised within the framework of medieval society and Christianity was the “apostolic life” (*vita apostolica*). The point they made can be summarized in this way: the church is apostolic in its doctrine, but is not apostolic in its life. It spells out the faith of the apostles, but does not live out the life of the apostles. Therefore the church is only half apostolic. In order to be fully apostolic, it is not enough to hold apostolic doctrine, it is necessary also to live the apostolic life. In other words, the question they raised is a very simple and yet very challenging one: What does it mean for the church to be “apostolic”? Which church can claim to be apostolic, if apostolicity implies not only carrying on the faith of the apostles, but also implementing the life of the apostles?

These questions are not outdated. As far as I can see, our Commission is trying to reach the goal of uniting apostolic faith (with the Nicene Creed document) with apostolic life (with the unity and renewal document). Yet the theme of apostolic life should be given more attention, for it is of crucial importance if we want to be “apostolic” in the full sense of the word. The unity we seek is indeed the unity between apostolic faith and apostolic life. In this sense I would even dare to suggest that the name of our Commission be changed, from “Faith and Order” to “Faith and Life”.

The unity we seek is, secondly, the unity between truth and love. In our own history we have experienced the awful consequences of the divorce between truth and love, which has taken place already in the ancient church already and has not yet been overcome even today. You know very well how many awful things have been done in Christian history in the name of Christian truth. You know — no, in fact you do not know, only God knows — how many men and women have been persecuted, tortured and killed in the name of truth. How was this possible? It was possible because truth has been conceived, received and carried on apart from love, as if love were not the very heart of truth, as if any Christian truth could be true without love, as if truth could be separated from love without losing its truth.

It seems to me that the divorce between truth and love is one of the worst things which has happened in Christian history. In this respect, I am struck and shocked by the fact that in none of the ancient creeds of the church, which we all recognize and receive as an adequate and ecumenical expression of the Christian truth, does the word “love” ever occur. Of course, it is implicit. But that is precisely the problem: it is implicit, whereas in the gospel it is explicit. One of the most urgent tasks of the ecumenical movement is to restore the unity between truth and love, calling the churches to gather around a truth which explicates love. This is the unity we seek.

Thirdly, the unity we seek is a unity in which freedom is not put in chains — even in golden chains or spiritual chains or mystical chains. We could say that we seek the unity between unity and freedom. We are all aware of the fact that the relations between unity and freedom are very difficult. The churches have learned very well the different ways through which the word of God is made to be silent. Even *Faith and Order* sometimes falls into this danger and temptation. In our own history we have experienced over and over again that what we called “freedom” was called “rebellion” by the dominating church authorities. Is freedom bound to be rebellious? It may well be, when the kind of unity it is confronted with is too narrow or too exclusive. It is also true that misuses of freedom are possible — freedom becoming “a chance for the flesh” (Gal. 5:12) — and in the history of later Protestantism we know all too well the often irresponsible way in which a freedom has been misunderstood as freedom to divide and subdivide.

But in dealing with the question of the relation between unity and freedom I am not thinking primarily of human or Christian freedom, as important as they may be. I am thinking primarily of the freedom of the

word of God in the church, which is vital to the church's life and renewal. We know how much churches fear the freedom of the word of God. Freedom has been seen very often as a threat to unity, but actually it is a threat only to uniformity. And yet only a unity in which the word of God is free will be a unity which runs the risk of welcoming freedom, thereby becoming a liberating unity. That is the unity we seek: a liberating unity, that is, a unity which liberates us from narrowness, selfishness, isolation, and leads us, with all other churches, to the fullness of Christ and of his gospel.

The Unity We Seek

JANET CRAWFORD

I wish to address this topic by looking at the unity we already have and at some of our experiences in the search for unity, and to do so from the perspective of a New Zealand Anglican. Much of what I say will probably sound familiar, at least to some of you, but it may be helpful to focus our discussion of unity in the reality of a specific context and experience.

New Zealand is a small country with a population of just over three million, including an indigenous minority, the Maori people, or *te tangata whenua o Aotearoa* — “the people who are the land”. The culture is predominantly Western and secular. There is no established church. The Anglican church, which began in New Zealand as a missionary church, has the largest membership, followed by the Roman Catholics, Presbyterians and Methodist churches, and a number of smaller Protestant denominations. There is a very small representation of Orthodox and Lutheran Christians. In this situation, closely related to our search for unity is a search for a truly indigenous Christianity, the realization of what it means to be Christian in our own time and place, a place which for most of us is far from our European roots and which, in spite of modern communications, still seems very far from Rome, Canterbury — and even from Geneva.

Time does not allow me to talk about exciting new developments in the ecumenical movement which have resulted in the replacement of the former National Council of Churches in New Zealand by the Conference of Churches in Aotearoa — New Zealand and its partner body, the Maori Ecumenical Council (*Te Runanga Whakawhanaunga o Aotearoa*). I do want, however, to point to the continuing importance of the Lund principle — that churches should do together everything except those things which conscience compels them to do apart. This principle has

been the basis for considerable ecumenical and ministerial training, and is now being used as a guiding principle by the Roman Catholic Church, which has recently entered into new ecumenical commitments, notably by joining the Conference of Churches. Yet in light of the Lund principle there still remains much work which churches could do together rather than independently, for example, in the areas of social services and evangelism.

The quest for organic unity consumed much energy in the sixties and early seventies, but the plan for union failed. This has left the five negotiating churches — Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, Associated Churches of Christ, Congregational Union — bound together for over twenty years in an act of commitment and thus still involved together in the search for visible unity of the church. Recently the Negotiating Churches Unity Council has accepted the principle of “unity by stages”, which entails an “evolutionary” approach to unity rather than the “package” approach of traditional union schemes. It involves building on areas of co-operation which already exist, and on working towards limited and immediate goals, in the belief and hope that each step will lead to another one. Different partners may decide on the appropriate steps to be taken together on the path to greater unity. The Methodist and Presbyterian churches have taken a number of steps together, including the establishment of a joint council on mission and the publication of a church newspaper.

In 1986, following the Anglican Consultative Council’s endorsement of the concept of “unity by stages”, the general synod of the Anglican church in New Zealand agreed to accept this concept as its guiding principle in all ecumenical relationships. We are now engaged in discerning the first steps which need to be taken with our different partners on the ecumenical journey. This process needs sensitivity on our part as Anglicans, for in our national context our church is dominant in terms of size and resources and bears much responsibility for the failure of the plan for union. For this reason we are challenged by others to prove our ecumenical commitment by our actions rather than by our words. One response has been to make certain legislative changes towards allowing members of the negotiating churches to participate in Anglican decision-making structures. This is an attempt to make the necessary constitutional changes consequent on our theological understanding of baptism as the basis of church membership, and to realize the practical implications of mutual recognition of membership.

As well as the multilateral search for unity to which the five negotiating churches are committed, there is also a series of bilateral conversations,

including Anglican-Roman Catholic and Methodist-Roman Catholic. The BEM document is proving useful in these dialogues.

One result of the church union movement was the formation of union co-operating parishes, roughly equivalent to the local ecumenical projects in England or the local ecumenical congregations in India. These were originally formed as provisional measures, pending the realization of organic unity, but with the failure of the plan for union they have been left suspended somewhere between the denominational past and a future united or uniting church. There are now more than 130 co-operative ventures throughout the country. In practical terms this means that more than one-half of all Methodists belong to some form of co-operative venture, while in my own Anglican diocese more than 25 percent of the parishes are involved in some form of local co-operation.

While they have no desire to form yet another denomination, these ecumenical congregations are increasingly impatient with their "parent" bodies, which seem to have lost enthusiasm for organic unity, and frustrated with church structures which are frequently unable to deal with the practical problems of church membership arising from these local ventures. They feel like the unwanted children of a failed marriage. At the same time they share an enormous energy and enthusiasm arising from the actual experiences of being locally united for mission. They are full of life, hope and energy, and their representatives will soon meet together in a national consultation which I expect will issue a challenging message to the churches. One idea which has already aroused considerable interest is a proposal for the creation of "denomination-free zones"! Whatever happens, I am sure that these local ecumenical congregations will not disappear, but will continue to provide a challenge and a model of local unity.

At the same time as the search for visible unity of the church continues in fairly traditional ways, new divisions are arising within a number of denominations. To give one example, in the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand there is at present a very difficult controversy over baptism which is threatening unity within the church. In that church, which believes in and practises infant baptism, there are now a number of ministers who are refusing on conscientious grounds to baptize children. This serious challenge to traditional Presbyterian faith and order will have to be addressed by the general assembly later this year. In this and similar situations the BEM document can be most helpful.

Another emerging trend is found among Christians of all denominations for whom unity is found not in apostolic faith, or in issues of church order, but in agreement on certain moral and social issues. Diversity of

Christian belief and practice on issues such as abortion, personal sexual orientation and nuclear weapons is replaced by some with an insistence that these are fundamental matters of faith, with a consequent tendency to "unchurch" those who do not agree with their particular point of view. This results in new disunity within the churches, and also in a new form of "ecumenism" as new alliances are formed, usually on matters of public controversy. Such alliances cross denominational boundaries and are generally impatient with traditional concepts and discussions of unity.

My final point has to do with the challenge posed to traditional understandings of unity by the demand for the recognition of racial diversity within the church. In the 150 years since the colonization of our country began, Maori identity and culture have been almost totally submerged in the churches as in society. In the Anglican church as in other churches, theology and liturgy, church structures and decision making have all been dominated by *pakeha* (European) ways of believing, thinking and acting. Recently we — that is, we *pakeha* Anglicans — have begun a process of metanoia, of conversion, of relinquishment. We have entered into a commitment to bi-cultural partnership with Maori Anglicans. This means allowing the minority group the freedom to develop and to express the faith according to its own understanding of the gospel, to order its own life, to express its own culture — to be Christian and Anglican in its own way.

An immediate practical consequence of this commitment to bicultural partnership has been a revision of the constitution of the church. Next year general synod will vote on proposals which will probably result in the creation of parallel dioceses based on cultural identity, and on the parallel episcopacy of Maori and *pakeha* bishops. It is important to note that in this case it is the cultural minority who wish the freedom for separate development. Thus to divide a church may appear to be a failure in unity; and yet we have come to believe that separation may ultimately lead to a more authentic unity, the unity experienced when diversity is recognized and affirmed by equal partners.

Our understanding of the gospel, endorsed by our growing experience, has led us to accept *partnership* as a dominant principle in our search for Christian unity, a principle applying to relationships between churches as well as to relationships within churches. That is, we are convinced that true unity can be achieved only by those who are equal partners. This equality has nothing to do with size or number, but everything to do with identity, with mutual respect and trust, and with the freedom of each partner to respond to the gospel in its own way.

The Unity We Seek: Some Observations

DAN-ILIE CIOBOTEA

In documents produced by the World Council of Churches it is never clear whether the phrase “the unity we seek” refers to the unity of the church or to the unity of separated Christians in their different confessions. This ambiguity appears all the more glaring, in my view, when we confess in the creed that the church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic (and not that it will be this only in heaven!). The one undivided church cannot be equated with the whole of Christendom or with the sum total of doctrinally divided confessions.

This problem must therefore be taken into account in ecumenical reflections on unity so as to clarify the relation between the unity preserved and the unity lost in history due to divisions.

Generally speaking the description of the visible unity of the church, especially since the New Delhi Assembly (1961), which led eventually to the study on “Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry” (BEM) as well as to the study on the apostolic faith, has been extremely fruitful. It seems increasingly necessary, however, also to reflect more deeply in the ecumenical movement on the divine content of the unity of the church, given to the church as the body of Christ in the Holy Spirit, on the one hand, and on the human response, on the other. To do so will also enable us to grasp more fully that the goal of the unity of the church is not simply mission but in a deep sense salvation: namely, to heal the divisions of human nature introduced by sin, to unite human beings with God and among each other.

In other words, the sacraments of the church and diakonia in the world (what the church fathers called “the sacrament of the brother/sister”) are not simply signs of unity serving the mission of the church but also saving acts which unite us to Christ. To work for the healing of divisions which

are the result of sin is, therefore, to work for our salvation and for the glory of God.

In this reflection on the nature of the unity of the church, the criterion must be the apostolic Tradition attested in the gospel and transmitted in and through the church throughout the ages in the power of the Holy Spirit. The apostolic experience and understanding of the unity of the church must be normative for an ecumenical vision of unity. This experience and understanding will enable us to grasp more fully and firmly that the unity of the church is at once a divine gift *and* a human task, in the sense that the unity of the church does not come to it from this world but that it has to be demonstrated in this world as a sign of the final unity of this world in the kingdom of God.

The prayer of Jesus for unity (John 17) shows that the source, content and model of the church's unity is the divine Trinitarian life, that is, the Trinitarian communion (*koinonia*). Unity in God is not the same as an arithmetical unity; the one God does not exist in an eternal, undifferentiated solitude but is the *living* God, an eternal communion (or fellowship) of life and love between distinct divine persons, indwelling in each other and mutually self-giving and containing each other. Fundamentally, the unity of those who are united to Christ by faith is the expression of the Trinitarian life within humanity.

To the mind of the apostles, the unity of the church is the experience of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Cor. 13:14).

The church's participation in this divine fellowship turns, in the unity of the church, into a saving act or event which heals the fragmentation of human nature into isolated and mutually opposed individuals and peoples.

Only the church's experience of the grace of Christ which heals, the love of God the Father which pardons and forgives, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit which unites what is distinct — this unique experience qualifies the church to see the unity in diversity, without separation and without confession, in the very mystery of God himself: only one God in the three Persons, distinct and equal; Father, Son and Holy Spirit; the unity of the Person of the incarnate Christ in its two distinct natures, divine and human. By its participation in the communion of the Trinitarian life, the church is equipped to recognize from Pentecost to the end of the world only one body of Christ in the multitude of its members, only one Lord in the diversity of ministries, only one church in the many local churches, only one Spirit in the diversity of its gifts, only one apostolic Tradition expressed in the diversity of its cultural forms, only one

scripture in the diversity of its constituent writings which bear witness to the same unique mystery of the Person of the incarnate Christ — for there is no gospel writing which does not refer to the mystery of Christ!

Its participation in the mystery of unity as the indivisible communion of divine Persons who are distinct but never in mutual opposition equips the church to see that its unity is not achieved by the simple addition or juxtaposition of different realities but by the reciprocal communication of their common content, in such a way that the different realities mutually permeate and contain one another. This spiritual and ecclesial understanding of unity as *perichoresis* (interpenetration) permitted the apostles and the church fathers, and the ecumenical theologians of our own day (at Montreal in 1963), to recognize that the apostolic Tradition is concentrated in scripture and that scripture is explicated and experienced in the living Tradition of the church throughout the ages; that scripture and Tradition are not in mutual opposition but each is in the other, for they are two different forms (one stable and the other dynamic) of witness borne to the unique mystery of Christ, a mystery whose content is the same in both scripture and the Tradition.

The unity of the church as a divine gift requires of the church unceasing prayer for that gift (this makes prayer for unity the primary action for the promotion of unity). Unity is visibly expressed in this world through the sacramental life, the diaconal and missionary life, and the common maintenance and defence of unity (by conciliarity) in face of the heresy and schism which are a constant threat to the church in a sinful world.

Both the apostolic understanding of the nature of divisions or schisms, and the spiritual effort of the apostolic church to overcome them or to heal them by metanoia (a new way of thinking and living), forgiveness and reconciliation, are crucial for the comprehension of the contemporary ecumenical movement. This is, in actual fact, a movement of metanoia, reconciliation and renewal in the life of Christians and the separated communities. The present and future ecumenical approach to the nature of Christian unity and its ultimate goal, i.e. mission aiming at the salvation of the world, should go hand in hand with a deep theological study of, and a spiritual attitude towards, the causes — and the remedy — of the divisions among Christians.

3. The Unity We Seek

Group Discussion, Plenary Discussion and Plenary Action

Group Report. The Unity We Seek

1. "God wills unity. Our presence [here] bears testimony to our desire to bend our wills to his. However we may justify the beginnings of disunion, we lament its continuance and henceforth must labour, in penitence and faith, to build up our broken walls" (Lausanne Faith and Order conference, 1927).

2. From the beginning of the ecumenical movement the churches have recognized the need to come together and in doing so to state together what is "the unity we seek".

3. Already in Edinburgh in 1937 there was a report on "the several conceptions of church unity", all of which were declared to be essentially based in a unity given in Christ.

4. This statement and the series of statements which have followed it¹ show clearly that there is a common awareness among Christians of being brought together by the Triune God in renewal. Such renewal springs directly from the perfect divine life and saving action of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Such renewal is a renewal of love in a unity of freedom and truth. How such living unity is to be expressed together still eludes us, despite the particular and rich church experience of each of our traditions. Yet the worship of the churches constantly draws them to glorify the one God together.

5. We* rejoice in progress towards visible unity made since the World Council of Churches came into being. The member churches have with thankfulness come closer to one another in mutual understanding, in common prayer and in shared witness and service. Yet there are also

* From this point on, "we" in the text is intended to refer to the members of the Faith and Order Plenary Commission.

many groupings of Christians, both new ones and those of long standing, who have not felt able to or called to belong to, or to co-operate with, the WCC, and in some cases regard its work as being in error. Many of them have their own ways of working together and the ecumenical movement as a whole needs their participation.

6. Today the unity we seek in prayer and hope has to be envisioned in a way that can engage the imagination and loyalty of many new Christians in rapidly growing groups. More than ever we must be open to diversity which enriches unity; more than ever we must seek God's help to overcome a divisiveness which destroys unity.

7. Since the last WCC Assembly in Vancouver, the bilateral conversations, the testimony of united and uniting churches and the multilateral work of the Faith and Order Commission, together with the common efforts of Christians in mission and service, have underscored both the value of diversity and its dangers.

8. Many Christians, many churches press eagerly forward in mission and service without reflecting upon the need for unity. To them we again address the call to unity which we have heard as we studied the scriptures. In Budapest we have particularly studied the letter to the Philippians, where Paul presents the humility and glory of Christ as incentives to being in full accord and of one mind.

9. Many Christians, many churches have grown weary in well-doing in the search for unity. To them we bring the reminder that the unity we seek is to be sought not in our own strength but through the sustaining, challenging grace of God.

10. Many Christians, many churches are bewildered by the variety of concepts of unity. To them we bring the challenge to test the concepts by acting upon them. We believe also that at the projected world conference on Faith and Order it will be essential to hear these concepts and visions expounded by those who have developed them. Thus the concepts may, we hope, be brought into a creative encounter and so lead to a fuller discernment of God's will for unity.

11. The unity we seek is a unity not only from God but in God, the Holy Trinity. It is a unity which arises out of God's gifts in word, in baptism, in eucharist, in which the churches confess the apostolic faith, and in which they recognize and therefore share ministries duly called and sent by God in the church. It is unity "that the world may believe", never to be separated from the mission of the church to God's world and the purpose of God for the renewal of human community. It is a unity which is a sign anticipating that dwelling of God with his people which the Book of Revelation describes.

12. We do not underestimate the difficulty of the issues on which the

churches have not yet reached agreement. Yet because God in Christ took flesh by the Spirit, the unity we seek must find embodiment in forms, structures and relationships between Christians, sufficient to enable them to worship, witness and serve together, in a way which offers healing to the brokenness of the world.

13. It is the task of the churches to continue the process of deciding upon these forms, structures and relationships, always aware of the need of Christians for repentance and renewed faith, and of the churches' calling to mission and service. It is a principle in such decision making that churches should listen to and respect the witness of their partner churches, as each church seeks to live its life under the rule of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

14. Yet the unity we seek is not only to be defined authoritatively by the churches together. It is also sought in the prayer of the faithful and depends upon the renewal and spiritual discipline of their lives as they commit themselves to God's service in the world.

15. We began with words from Lausanne; we end with words from Vancouver, where the search for unity was focused as a eucharistic vision. "Christ — the life of the world — unites heaven and earth, God and world, spiritual and secular. His body and blood, given us in the elements of bread and wine, integrate liturgy and diaconate, proclamation and acts of healing... The eucharistic vision provides us with new and inspiring guidance on our journey towards a full and credible realization of our given unity."²

16. "Such a unity — overcoming church division, binding us together in the face of racism, sexism, injustice — would be a witnessing unity, a credible sign of the new creation."³

NOTE

¹ For Lausanne see "Report, First World Conference on Faith and Order, 1927", paras 5-8, in Lukas Vischer ed., *A Documentary History of the Faith and Order Movement: 1927-1963*, St Louis, Missouri, Bethany Press, 1963, pp.28-29. For Edinburgh see "Final Report, Second World Conference on Faith and Order, 1937", paras 113-126, in *A Documentary History*, pp.61-64. For New Delhi see "Report of the Section on Unity, Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1961", paras 2-18, in *A Documentary History*, pp.144-150. For Nairobi, see "Report Section II, 'What Unity Requires'. Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches", paras 2-7, in David M. Paton ed., *Breaking Barriers: Nairobi 1975*, London and Grand Rapids, SPCK and Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1975, pp.59-61. For Vancouver see "Report. Taking Steps Towards Unity. Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1983", paras 4-9, in David Gill ed., *Gathered for Life*, Geneva and Grand Rapids, WCC and Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983, pp.44-45.

² *Gathered for Life*, op. cit.

³ *Ibid.*, p.45.

Plenary Discussion and Action

A report from the group on "The Unity We Seek" was presented by Martin Cressey for discussion by plenary. He explained that the assignment had been to draft a statement which, after being received by plenary, would be further developed as a contribution to the WCC Assembly in Canberra in 1991. The group had also, he noted, produced a minute recording the course of its reflections, and had asked that this should be included in the record of the meeting and used in the future drafting process. (This minute is printed on the following page.)

Ten persons participated in the debate on the report which had been presented to plenary. In this the importance of the link between unity and the glory of God was emphasized, as was God's "saving act par excellence, namely reconciliation". It was noted that acceptance of pluralism must not become an excuse for syncretism; thus a clear vision of unity was required. One speaker called attention to a pattern by which references to "human realities such as racism and brokenness" seem to come only towards the end of Faith and Order documents. Such ethical issues, it was insisted, deserve more attention than this.

For some the document showed a "puzzling juxtapositioning of 'we' and 'the churches'": who was in fact meant? The principle of catholicity was said to be on a "horizontal, pragmatic level", thus not reflecting the Orthodox understanding of catholicity as "the unity of the church in love", a love which accepts nothing against the doctrine of any other church.

Several emphasized that unity should be presented positively, and that the discussion of the unity we seek should be complemented by a description both of the unity which we already possess, and the growing into unity which is yet possible. Here it is important to include the role of common prayer in our search for unity. While we must build upon our previous ecumenical experience, the vision of unity must grow to encompass churches which have so far chosen not to participate in the ecumenical movement. The text would be strengthened by our finding a brief, commanding phrase or term to describe our search for unity, something to catch the reader's attention and to make clear the importance of this critical subject.

At the invitation of the moderator, the presenter then moved that:

The Plenary Commission receive the text for transmission to a post-Budapest group to prepare a text for Canberra.

This was approved with no negative votes and one abstention.

* * *

The Unity We Seek. Minute of Group Discussion*

The Central Committee of the WCC requested that Faith and Order undertake “a fresh consideration of the concepts and forms of the ‘unity we seek’ in the ecumenical movement”, and prepare a draft statement to be submitted to the 1991 WCC Assembly in Canberra.¹ This was the aim of the discussions in our group. Throughout the history of the Commission on Faith and Order, and of the WCC, concepts of the unity we seek have been expressed in formula-like texts (Lausanne 1927, Edinburgh 1937, New Delhi 1961, Nairobi 1975, Vancouver 1983).² They always reflect the particular situation of the churches at that time, and the respective phases of the ecumenical movement. If we are to draft another text to describe the unity we seek it also should make clear the relation to the present situation.

In the following we have listed some of the elements which should be taken into account for the drafting of a new programmatic text on the unity we seek.

1. The unity which we seek is based on the unity which has already been given to us through the grace of God and which we are allowed to experience in various ways. During the past decades, the churches have learnt afresh to live with each other and for each other in many forms. However, the unity we seek has to correspond to the unity which already has been given to the churches in so far as it has been instituted in them as the work of the Triune God.

2. The discussions during this Faith and Order Commission meeting, much more than at previous meetings, have stressed the relation of the church with the Triune God on the one hand, and to the present-day world with the variety of its experiences and challenges. This fact should be taken into account for a possible new draft about a model of unity.

* This minute records the reflections of the group as it worked towards its proposed statement on the unity we seek. It is included here for its intrinsic interest and as material towards a fresh Faith and Order contribution in this area to the WCC Canberra Assembly.

3. The New Testament mentions the unity of the church not only in John 17, but also in various other texts. These should be studied together and, if appropriate, taken into account.

4. For the church on its way through history, the unity we seek will always remain a free gift of God, which God grants in answer to our and Christ's ongoing prayer. In this sense we can only speak about the unity we seek in a dialectical way.

5. The unity of the church has always to be seen in connection with the one baptism through which human beings become members of the church. The mutual recognition of baptism by the churches has been, and is, a particularly important element of unity.

6. The unity which we seek does not exclude, but includes diversity. But in order not to deduce from this principle the possibility of arbitrary variety, a series of criteria are needed to define what is sufficient and required for unity. The criteria mentioned were the apostolicity of ecclesial structures and acts; the proper proclamation of the gospel and the proper administration of the sacraments;³ the qualification of certain elements in the church as *institutiones divinae* (in the Catholic tradition); the promotion of love, etc.

7. Some of the bilateral dialogues have, in recent years, discussed in some detail the theme of the unity we seek, e.g. the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue, whose results have been published in the document called "Facing Unity".⁴ We recommend that this and other relevant studies be taken into account.

8. We must not forget that the unity we seek will not be viable without a spiritual renewal of the churches and their members. Through repentance, conversion and humility Christians must recognize that it is God's will that commands unity, that they are constantly failing in their obedience to that command and are dependent upon God's forgiveness; and that they will only reach its fulfilment at the end of time.

NOTES

¹ World Council of Churches: Central Committee, Minutes of the Thirty-Eighth Meeting, Geneva, WCC, 1987, p.44.

² See note 1, p.259 above.

³ See *Confessio Augustana* 7, and also 5.

⁴ "Facing Unity: Models, Forms and Phases of Catholic-Lutheran Fellowship", Roman Catholic/Lutheran Joint Commission, Geneva, Lutheran World Federation, 1985. German: "Einheit vor uns", Paderborn and Frankfurt am Main, Verlag Bonifatius-Druckerei and Verlag Otto Lembeck, 1980.

Unity and Mission: a Middle Eastern Perspective

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I have been asked to offer to this meeting of the Plenary Commission on Faith and Order a Middle Eastern perspective on the question of the inter-relatedness of unity and mission. In order to proceed with some clarity and order, I would like to raise four questions: Why is this item on the agenda of Faith and Order? Is it, theologically speaking, a legitimate concern for Faith and Order? How is the inter-relatedness of unity and mission manifested in the life and witness of the churches in the Middle East? What are the implications of this interconnectedness with reference to the future work of Faith and Order?

Let me try to provide some answers to these questions, with particular reference to the third.

Background to the discussion

The concern for a dynamic inter-relation between unity and mission has been, during the last ten years, a growing trend in the life and work of the World Council of Churches in general and in Faith and Order and the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) in particular. In fact the issue as such is not a new one for the WCC. In 1951, in the so-called Rolle declaration about the inter-relation of unity and mission, the WCC emphatically stated that they are "indissolubly connected".¹ This basic theological conviction, however, was never given any significant expression in the programmes of the Council. For example, one could hardly identify the question of mission in Faith and Order's continuous search for visible unity, or the question of unity in the programmatic concerns of CWME. Although some attempts of limited scope were made to spell out the important aspects and implications of the interconnectedness of unity and mission, they basically remained separate issues and

underwent parallel theological developments in the thought and work of the Council at large.

As you know, during the last few years, upon the recommendation of the WCC Executive Committee (1984), a joint project on unity and mission was launched by Faith and Order and CWME with an aim of holding a world conference on unity and mission. Later on, upon the insistence of Faith and Order, it was decided to cancel the joint world conference and initiate a "joint theological reflection and clarification of the inter-relation between mission and unity" to help the churches "to integrate these two concerns in their faith and witness".² It was also agreed that this process of common theological exploration should culminate with a joint statement to be presented to the next Assembly of the WCC in Canberra (1991). As a first step towards a programmatic cooperation, some preliminary efforts were made by both sides to re-read BEM and "Mission and Evangelism: an Ecumenical Affirmation" in their inter-relatedness. The outcome of this rather experimental attempt was, in my judgment, significant in opening a promising avenue for possible future joint work between Faith and Order and CWME in this area. Just a few months ago, CWME, at its San Antonio world conference, came up with a strong affirmation that mission and unity belong together.

In my view, a joint statement on unity and mission could be only the immediate aim of this joint venture. We have to go beyond that, and I think even beyond the "joint theological reflection and clarification", to embark on a process of programmatic collaboration with CWME. Therefore in this meeting we, as the Commission on Faith and Order, are invited to pursue the discussion with an attempt to outline, at least in its major elements, the content, the nature, and the scope of our joint work with CWME.

Unity and mission: one act of one church

The *raison d'être* of the church includes two inseparable dimensions: unity in Christ and service to humanity. Unity points to what the church is to *be* and mission to what the church has to *do*. In fact, the church is a community that not only grows into communion with Christ but also a community that is being sent by Christ to the world for a specific mission. One should not, therefore, speak only in terms of interaction or inter-relation, but of the intimate interwovenness of unity and mission. To draw a line of demarcation between the two is simply a new heresy. A divided church cannot have a united mission. Mission without unity is void of any ecclesiological basis.

But what do we mean by “unity” and “mission”? These questions are not directly related to my topic. However, let me, as an Orthodox coming from the Middle East, open here a parenthesis and give you some brief and simple answers to these rather complex questions.

1. The unity of the church is neither a doctrinal *modus vivendi* nor a sheer co-operation nor a kind of peaceful co-habitation. It is the communion of the church in Christ as well as the communion of local churches in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship. The church is one “in each place” and “in all places”.³

2. The church has no mission. Its mission is to participate in God’s mission. The very being of the church is missionary; the church is, indeed, a missionary event. Therefore, mission is not one of the “functions” of the church, but it is the life of the church that goes beyond itself to embrace the whole humanity and the whole creation. The mission of the church is not the expansion of the church, but the establishment of the kingdom of God.

Unity and mission must be understood in the perspective of the kingdom. They are for the kingdom and, as such, they are dynamically inter-related.⁴ What does this mean?

The inter-relatedness of unity and mission is not a question of methodology or strategy. It is an ontological one. It is related to the very essence of *koinonia* as fellowship in the Triune God, and to the specific vocation of *koinonia* as participation in God’s economy in and for the world. In fact “being in Christ” (a favourite expression of St Paul) is being a partner of his work. Therefore unity is participation in the life of the Triune God. Mission is commitment to the work of the Triune God incarnated in Jesus Christ. They are both God’s gift and command. It is only in unity with the Triune God that the church is able to fulfill its vocation. Unity is a pre-condition for mission. Co-operation in mission can enhance unity. Unity in its turn cannot be considered as an independent concern. It has to be located in the context of God’s saving purpose for all humanity, for the whole creation. Thus the “departmentalization” of unity and mission is a distortion of the true nature of the church.

Therefore the question whether “mission and unity” or “unity and mission” which prevailed at a certain time in our ecumenical discussion is, in my view, a false dichotomy. In the praxis of the early church there was never such a separation or prioritizing. Unity and mission have always belonged to the very essence of the church. The call to unity and the call to mission have never been different callings, but always one call;

not different acts, but always one act of one church. Each one was conditioned and determined by the other; each one led into the other.

Unity and mission are for the upbuilding (oikodome) of the church in its commitment to God's purpose for the world. But the inter-relatedness referred to above remains sheer theory if it is not given concrete expression in the life of the community of faith. The churches are constantly challenged to re-read the biblical message and to listen to the call of God for unity and mission in different socio-economic and politico-religious contexts.⁵ In fact, the credibility of ecclesia depends on how it responds to the call of God in Christ and participates in his work.

Unity and mission in the Middle East

In the Middle East the churches are striving for visible unity and a common mission in the context of multi-religious societies and in the midst of ideological conflicts and turmoil. To the best of my knowledge, unity and mission are not presented to the churches in any part of the world with such acute urgency — indeed as the only option for survival — as in the Middle East. They are integral to, and closely interconnected with the daily life and witness of our churches. In what way is the inter-relatedness of unity and mission presently manifested in the actual life of the churches in the Middle East? What are its most distinctive features?

An elaborated analysis of this issue is beyond the purview of my presentation. I will try, within the time allotted to me, to bring under the spotlight only those aspects which, I believe, not only illustrate the inseparable and dynamic interconnection of unity and mission, but also help us to have a comprehensive and correct grasp of the peculiarity of the Middle East within world Christendom.

1. Eucharist: the emerging and converging point of unity and mission

The eucharist is the source of unity and mission. In the eucharist, they become one act of one church. In other words, in the eucharistic celebration, the community of faith not only is united with Christ but also sent to the world by Christ. It is this eucharistic fellowship with Christ that constitutes the very foundation of mission. It is this sending out to the world that sustains and gives concrete implications to unity with Christ.

The eucharistic act is, by its very nature, an act of unity and mission. It is both the ingoing (*missio ad intra*) and the outgoing (*missio ad extra*) of the church. The inter-relatedness of unity and mission is given a dynamic manifestation in the eucharist. Eating the body and drinking the blood of

Christ makes us one with Christ, transforms us into new people of the new creation and sends us to the world to transform and re-create it through Christ: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:26).

The eucharist is a sharing event. God shares himself with us, entering into our life and making us one with him. At the same time God invites us to share in his divinity. This mutual sharing of God and humanity is aimed at the salvation of humanity and the creation. In fact, sharing one bread means sharing one mission and vice versa. The eucharist is the communion of the community of faith in the life and fellowship of the Triune God. It is, as well, participation in God's mission in the world through the proclamation of the good news, service to one's neighbour and the struggle against dehumanizing structures and powers.

Therefore any step towards unity and engagement in mission is essentially a eucharistic act. It is through the eucharist that the church becomes *koinonia* in the Triune God. It is through the eucharistic act that *koinonia* becomes a "missionary event"⁶ acquiring kerygmatic and diaconic functions. The eucharist is a sign of, as well as a call for, unity and mission. It is the kingdom in anticipation, and as such it embraces the whole of creation. Local and universal, time and space are united in it.

The eucharist as the supreme manifestation of unity and mission has always been at the heart of Christian life in the Middle East. The eucharist has built up the community of faith and sustained it in its life and witness. In the past, during the times of persecution, and today, in a minority situation, the eucharist remains for our churches the living source as well as the emerging and converging point of unity and mission.

2. Unity and mission as a continuous diakonia

Diakonia belongs to the very nature of the church. Being in communion with Christ is loving the neighbour, being with the sick and afflicted. These are not just the "moral obligations" of the church but rather her constitutive elements. The church does not "have" a diakonia; it is a diakonia, namely a continuous and committed discipleship to Christ for the rebuilding of world community and re-creating the fallen world according to the plans of God. Through diakonia the church becomes one with Christ and at the same time brings Christ to the world. Diakonia is both the expression of the unity of the church and the implementation of the gospel message.

Such an understanding of diakonia has always been dominant in the life of the churches in the Middle East. It has been a living source of growth

in unity and an effective way of witnessing to Christ. Our churches have developed a kind of diakonia that goes beyond regular charity and expresses the basic values of Christian faith and life through sharing, solidarity and community building. The churches' diakonia has gone beyond the confessional and Christian boundaries to include the Muslim society at large. In fact the churches' diaconic role, particularly in the areas of health, welfare and education, has become a driving force in the development of social action in the multi-religious societies of the Middle East.

Diakonia has also introduced division and mistrust in the region. The flow of Western diakonia to the area through Western structures and methodologies has not only created a strong dependency between the so-called "receiving" and the "donor" churches and brought about divisions among the local churches, but also has become a factor of mistrust among the Muslim societies vis-à-vis the local churches. The return to a local, indigenous diakonia remains a basic bond of fellowship among the local churches, an important instrument of Christian mission and a safe avenue of good relations with our neighbours. During the last few decades our churches have taken significant and promising steps to this effect, particularly through the creation of the Middle East Council of Churches and other local ecumenical bodies.

3. Unity and mission as solidarity with the oppressed

Being in the fellowship of the Triune God and proclaiming the gospel call for a firm attitude towards the situation of injustice. The church exists for the kingdom; it serves the kingdom. It cannot become and remain a eucharistic community, i.e. the sign, the foretaste and sacrament of the kingdom, without entering into the brokenness of the world and facing violence, hatred, injustice and evil. Therefore, any attempt to separate unity and mission from social justice would be the denial of the true nature of the church.

The church has a prophetic role to play. This implies judging the world, rejecting its "powers and principalities", challenging human self-confidence and self-sufficiency, and taking sides with the oppressed. This is an inseparable part of the church's unity and mission.

Solidarity with the poor and oppressed has been central to the life and witness of the churches in the Middle East. Our churches have always been avant-garde in movements of liberation, nationalization, anti-colonialism and in the struggle for human rights and self-determination. In fact, the churches' awareness of their common responsibility vis-à-vis

justice and peace has helped immensely in giving more visibility to their unity, as well as a meaningful and efficient expression to Christian mission in the multi-religious societies of the Middle East.

4. Unity and mission as a call for renewal

The Christ-event is a call for a new relationship with God and the world. This call becomes a reality in the eucharist which is the new creation. Thus the church is not a participant in the renewal process of the world; it is a renewed community by and in Christ, and is destined to become the ferment of, and instrument for, the renewal of the whole of humanity and the creation.

Therefore mission is not the expansion of the church, an overseas "enterprise", but essentially the renewal of the local community of faith⁷ for the renewal of the entire human community. The unity of the church is not a doctrinal consensus, but fundamentally the renewal of the broken fellowship with Christ. The unity of the church and humankind, and the renewal of the church and the world, are inseparably linked in the divine economy. Renewal is thus a dynamic process of becoming what God intended to do for the world in Jesus Christ. It is never simply a change⁸ in response to new conditions, but essentially the transformation of human beings, community and the whole creation.

Renewal is an urgent "must" for the churches of the Middle East. The self-purification and self-understanding of these churches through a dynamic process of critical self-assessment is, indeed, a growing need. In my view, our churches must be involved in this renewal process on three interconnected levels: first, our churches should re-Christianize those areas of their life where secularization has become dominant to the extent of questioning the viability and reliability of Christian faith. Education, youth work, women and family life are crucial domains where the church can and must enhance the renewal process. Second, Middle Eastern Christianity must re-"orientalize" itself, that is, it must re-discover and express anew its Eastern roots and identity. The overwhelming presence of Western norms of life, categories of thinking, and structures and methodologies of decision making in the life of these churches has not only begun to distort their peculiar identity but also led them to be considered, in some sensitive regions, as so-called "representatives" of Western cultures and ideologies. Therefore a process of critical indigenization is an absolute necessity for the restoration of the true identity, as well as for the acceptability, of these churches by their Muslim neighbours. Third, the churches of the Middle East are more sensitive to their

obedience to the past than concerned with the new demands and the growing concerns of present-day societies. They are called to discern, through a creative process of self-renewal, the challenges of the kingdom in the midst of new and often conflicting situations.

Renewal is a progress towards unity. It is, as well, an obedient response to God's call for the salvation of the world. The words of the heads of the churches in the Middle East are quite eloquent: "Unless we live in a constant state of spiritual renewal... we will be unable to give a vital witness."⁹

5. Unity and mission as dialogue in a multi-religious society

Our relation with God and our mission to the world cannot be separated from our relation with our neighbour. In the pluralistic societies of today "my neighbour's faith and mine"¹⁰ do not simply co-exist; they interact and correlate. In fact, we always remind ourselves in our ecumenical pilgrimage that the unity of the church and the unity of humankind are interdependent and that there exists a growing interaction between the living faiths. We have also come to realize that the transformation of the world and the building of world community are no longer a one-way track. It implies mutual openness, mutual listening and a common partnership.

Unity and mission are wrestled with in the Middle East exclusively in the context of dialogue with Islam. Dialogue in this part of the world is not a conceptual notion but an existential reality. It is a way of life, one which has penetrated into all spheres of society. The churches live in a situation of permanent dialogue. They share with Islam the same land, the same history and the same destiny. The daily encounter with Islam has greatly affected our theological outlook, our values and traditions, our understanding of ourselves; in other words, the whole existence of the churches is shaped by their living among Muslims.

The Christian mission in the Middle East is not aimed at the conversion of Islam. We are living with people who are different in many respects and intend to remain different. But neither can the churches abandon their mission and replace it by dialogue. Thus they virtually live in a dilemma. On the one hand, the minority situation forces the churches to adopt a defensive attitude towards Islam; and on the other hand, the present-day demands and concerns of common interest challenge the churches to live and witness in a context of continuous dialogical interaction with Islam.

It is my firm conviction that it is high time for our churches to discover new missionary potentials. Such an approach might sound somewhat

doubtful, particularly at this present juncture of the history of the Middle East where the churches are directly faced with the resurgence of Muslim fundamentalism. But, in my judgment, there are at least three ways through which Christian unity and mission can be given a new stimulus and manifestation. First, the minority situation should not lead our churches to a state of stagnation and isolation, but rather it must engage them in a dynamic process of spiritual renewal. If it is conceived in the right perspective, and practised in a creative way, renewal is a source of strength and self-confidence. Second, the resurgence of Islam fundamentally means the rejection of secular and technological cultures, Western traditions and norms. It means the search for a spiritual basis for life. In spite of its negative repercussions the revival of Islam can be taken, in a sense, as a positive development and can become an encouraging factor in the churches' search for their true identity in Christ. Third, the criterion and perspectives which we used in the past to deal with Islam are no longer valid today. We need a coherent and relevant theology to make us more reliable partners to our neighbours in our common mission for world community building. We need a new theology which must be strong enough to be open to "mutual witness"¹¹ while resisting any temptation leading towards a possible compromise.

6. Unity and mission as sine qua non for survival

The church is a living reality in time and space. Hence, the church cannot live out its unity and carry on its mission without continuity.

The question of continuity is of crucial importance for the churches in the Middle East. Having been located as a tiny community in a predominantly Muslim socio-cultural milieu, the churches are permanently exposed to the danger of losing their distinct identity. In fact the politico-military upheavals, the economic instability and other prevailing negative factors and aspects have considerably reduced the physical presence of Christianity and the effectiveness of Christian witness in the region.

It is a plain fact that the very survival of the churches in the Middle East is at stake today more than at any time in their history. This is a major concern, one of utmost urgency and priority. The question of unity and mission is, in fact, a question of survival. For the centuries-old churches of the region survival is never a sheer continuity, a barren existence or self-perpetuation. It is a faithfulness to the past, openness to the new realities, courage for renewal and commitment to unity and mission. Our churches should be consciously aware of the fact that they cannot secure their continuity, and maintain their proper identity, without visible unity

and a common mission. The present situation of the Middle East makes the imperative of unity and mission much more acute and urgent.

7. Unity and mission as a "ministry of reconciliation"

The unity that Christ prayed for to his Father was not only the communion of the church with God, but also the communion of the whole of humanity with God. The mission of the church is to prepare and anticipate the way towards the unity of the whole of humanity and of the whole created order through the incorporation of "all things" in Christ. God "has reconciled us to him through Christ" and give us "the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:14). We are, therefore, "Christ's ambassadors of reconciliation" (5:19). The church can achieve its God-given mandate only by taking tangible steps towards visible unity and common witness.

The "ministry of reconciliation" is a major aim of the churches' unity and mission in the Middle East where ideological and political confrontations, manifested often through military clashes as well as structures of injustice and oppression, prevail with ever more acuteness and destruction. Our churches are called to become the sign of hope in a situation of profound hopelessness, the foretaste of the kingdom vis-à-vis the predominance of "powers and principalities", the instrument of unity and reconciliation in the midst of growing tensions and polarization.

The churches are partners with their Muslim neighbours in a common struggle for the rebuilding of the Middle Eastern society on the basis of God's justice and peace, of human rights and dignity.

8. Unity and mission as a living martyrria

I already pointed out that unity is a fellowship in the life of the Triune God and mission is participation in the work of God in the world. Unity and mission belong to God. The church is only an agent. It is God himself, in Jesus Christ, who is present and acts in the church's continuous struggle for unity and mission. Therefore, commitment to unity and engagement in mission is a costly discipleship. It is a living martyrria. In fact, martyrria is the highest expression of the unity of the church and the most concrete sign of the authenticity of Christian mission. Martyrria is not only bodily suffering or death; it is that quality of life and witness which makes the gospel message an incarnational reality in the midst of the tensions and suffering of the world.

Endeavour for unity and involvement in mission have been, for the churches of the Middle East, a continuous martyrria in life and even in death. This was not only due to the historical circumstances which they

went through, and the present hard realities to which they are exposed, but to an ecclesiology which considers unity and mission in terms of sacramental vision.

In the present situation of the Middle East, and vis-à-vis the enormous difficulties there of such varied nature and scope, the very existence of these churches is, indeed, a living martyrria.

A few remarks on Faith and Order and CWME collaboration

The concerns and perspectives emerging from the Christian presence and witness in the Middle East point in an existential way to the interconnectedness of unity and mission. Undoubtedly, this interconnectedness acquires much more visibility and urgency in a context of a multi-religious society. The Middle East is only one concrete example of that; we have many more or less similar situations in different parts of the world where Christian unity and mission are manifested in their intimate inter-relationship. In fact, the barriers and boundaries that used to separate nations and societies have almost disappeared. We are living in an interdependent and pluralistic world. Even so-called "Christian" Europe has become a pluralistic society. Therefore the present reality of the world urges us to deal with utmost seriousness with the question of unity in a broader ecclesiological perspective, and in relation to issues with which the churches grapple in their missionary involvement. It also reminds us to conceive of mission as emerging from fellowship in the Triune God and inseparable from the unity of the church.

Therefore the inter-relatedness of unity and mission is more than a joint "project" or a programmatic concern. It deals with the very nature of the church. Hence, some sort of working relationship between Faith and Order and CWME is imperative. It is beyond the purview of my task to outline the future work between these two sub-units of the WCC. I would just like to make a few observations in this respect. In my view, any kind of programmatic collaboration between Faith and Order and CWME must be based on the following criteria:

1. Faith and Order and CWME have different histories, traditions, orientations and styles of work. Faith and Order is a movement; CWME is not. The distinctiveness of these two bodies should be maintained intact. More precisely, Faith and Order must remain Faith and Order. Any compromise in the very identity of this movement or in its various structural, constitutional and programmatic aspects, is simply not acceptable.

2. The desired collaboration should not aim at producing a consensus document, but should seek ways and means of establishing creative interaction between unity and mission. This could be done through various programmes, study processes and work on the crucial issues of Faith and Order and CWME.

3. This joint initiative should eventually help Faith and Order and CWME to see their respective work as converging — and not parallel — processes.

4. Faith and Order needs to see its work not in terms of a study project, but as a dynamic process relating its insights, perspectives and visions to the daily experiences of the local churches. CWME in its action-oriented programmes needs to listen to Faith and Order in order to have a fuller grasp of the nature of Christian faith and truth. They both have to conceive their work in terms of mutual questioning and challenging.¹²

In my opinion whatever we do in Faith and Order has concrete missiological implications, and as such needs to be taken up by CWME and integrated in its programmatic concerns. To be more specific, is our commitment to the “unity of the church and the renewal of humankind” not a missionary challenge? Is our endeavour to “explicate the apostolic faith” to the present times not an integral part of the mission of our churches in their local situation? Do our strenuous efforts to involve the churches in a “reception” process of “baptism, eucharist and ministry” not have a significant bearing on the mission of the church?

Presently I see two opposite tendencies in Faith and Order which, in fact, have become very obvious in our discussions during the last couple of days here in Budapest. One tendency insists on sticking firmly to the mandate of Faith and Order, and the other advocates broadening the scope of Faith and Order issues and concerns. We have to be aware of the risks involved in these one-sided and biased approaches, for the reasons which I have just referred to. In Faith and Order we do not deal with issues *per se*, detached from the life and witness of the church. Such an understanding of Faith and Order will be the denial of the very nature and the goals of this movement. But neither can we enlarge our agenda to include issues which have only indirect relevance to the basic objectives of Faith and Order. We have to be selective.

Therefore the overall work of Faith and Order and CWME must be conceived, planned and implemented in an inter-related way. This is a major concern before us, which we must take seriously in the years to come.

NOTES

- ¹ "The Calling of the Church to Mission and to Unity", *Minutes and Reports of the Fourth Meeting of the Central Committee*, Rolle, Switzerland, Geneva, WCC, 1951, p.66. Cited in *International Review of Mission*, Vol. LXXII, No. 286, April 1983, p.154.
- ² *Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Commission: 1986, Potsdam, GDR*, Faith and Order Paper No. 134, Geneva, WCC, 1986, p.47.
- ³ Cf. the report of the section on unity, New Delhi assembly, in Lukas Vischer ed., *A Documentary History of the Faith and Order Movement 1927-1963*, St Louis, Missouri, Bethany Press, 1960, pp.144-145.
- ⁴ In the ecumenical movement, the Orthodox churches came to be known as churches being essentially concerned with unity. On the other hand, the Protestant churches came to be recognized as having mission as their main preoccupation. It is time that in our ecumenical fellowship we look at these major concerns in their dynamic inter-relatedness.
- ⁵ In response to God's call for unity and mission the churches have developed, during the last twenty years, in different situations different theological insights, perspectives and visions which have come to be known under the name of liberation theology, black theology, "God is dead" theology, feminist theology, theology of hope, etc. It is significant to note that today we no more do theology exclusively in confessional terms. Our theology has become largely contextual: it is African, South American, Continental, Middle Eastern, etc.
- ⁶ The eucharistic ecclesiology has newly been given quite an important place in our ecumenical discussion. But the eucharist has not yet been given a proper treatment in our *missiology*. The latter has laid so much emphasis on evangelism and diakonia, with a special concern for the practical aspects of mission, that it has almost neglected the eucharistic dimension. This is a lack which needs to be remedied. It is significant to note that eucharist as a "missionary event" has recently started to emerge in the ecumenical movement in general and in CWME in particular. This line of thinking must be pursued.
- ⁷ Emilio Castro is right when he says that "now we not only talk about mission in six continents, we know that mission is at home, right in our neighbourhood". *Sent Free*, Geneva, WCC, 1985, p.14.
- ⁸ It is important to note that for the West "change" is equivalent to progress, while for the East it simply means discontinuity. This is why the churches of the Middle East always use the term "renewal".
- ⁹ "Pastoral Message", *MECC Perspectives*, October 1986, Nos 6-7, p.16.
- ¹⁰ The title of a study guide for dialogue published in 1986 by the WCC's Sub-unit on Dialogue: *My Neighbour's Faith — and Mine: Theological Discoveries Through Inter-faith Dialogue*, Geneva, WCC, 1986.
- ¹¹ The concept of "mutual witness" was raised in the Mombasa (Kenya) conference on dialogue in 1979 (see *Christian Presence and Witness in Relation to Muslim Neighbours*, Geneva, WCC, 1981). But it was not, in my view, adequately dealt with. The WCC's Sub-unit on Dialogue must explore further the potentialities and promises, as well as the dangers, involved in this concept.
- ¹² I do not agree with the characterization of a CWME paper according which Faith and Order deals with "discipline" and CWME with "action" (see Padmasani J. Gallup, "The BEM Document from a CWME Perspective", Appendix 14 in CWME: *Minutes of the Meeting of the Commission*, Geneva, 5-11 July 1987, Geneva, WCC, 1987, p.89). In my view, such a separation between "discipline" and "action" is neither possible nor in accordance with the very nature of the work of these sub-units.

Unity and Mission in a European (Hungarian) Perspective

JANOS D. PASZTOR

The assumptions upon which this paper is based are identical with those generally recognized and accepted in the various bodies of the World Council of Churches, as expressed at the Bangkok¹ and Melbourne² conferences of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism and in the papers of the Faith and Order Commission meeting in Accra, Ghana.³ As is widely acknowledged, the modern ecumenical movement owes its origins to a large extent to the missionary concern around the turn of the century. It was then recognized that the disunity of the church of Christ presents great hindrances to the fulfilment of the Lord's command for mission.

The relationship of unity and mission has been a topic for study and discussion over the years. This discussion has been thoroughly ecumenical, and as such it has overstepped the framework of the various departments of the WCC. It has availed itself of the evidence supplied by biblical research and has taken into consideration the views of ecclesiastical communities which are critical or suspicious of, or even hostile towards, the WCC. Directly or indirectly the critique and views of non-Christian religions, and non-religious world-views such as Marxism, have also influenced this discussion.⁴

It has been recognized that the visible (conciliar) unity of the church is essential to carrying out the Lord's missionary command, and that the unity of the church is directly related to the unity of humankind. Humankind is just as hopelessly divided as the church: East and West, North and South face each other in serious tensions. In terms of human dignity, basic freedoms and standard of life there seems to be an unbridgeable abyss between groups of human beings. The recognition that the mission and unity of the church cannot and should not be pursued

without a struggle for the unity of humankind is closely related to the holistic approach to missions. This too has a sound biblical basis and rests upon a Trinitarian foundation.

The church's mission is fundamentally the mission of God the Trinity. God's sending himself is to be seen in three distinct yet inseparable phases, just as the three Persons of the One God are to be distinguished, but not to be separated from one another: (1) by creating the world and making human beings according to God's image, God himself entered the history which he was creating; (2) the incarnation of the Eternal Son to carry out the salvation of humankind and its environment, the created cosmos; (3) the sending of the Holy Spirit, the objective precondition of which was the mission of the Son (John 16:7). The mission of the Holy Spirit — in turn — creates the preconditions for the mission of the church. The purpose of the mission of the Holy Spirit is to bring about the common history of the Holy Spirit and humanity.⁵ This "common history" is that of the mission of the church, which would be unimaginable without the mission of the Holy Spirit: "Ohne die Sendung des Heiligen Geistes bleibt die Christusgeschichte Vergangenheit."⁶

The mission of the Holy Spirit realizes the presence of God in the world in a completely new way. In the mission of the Son, God identified himself with one man, Jesus of Nazareth; in the mission of the Holy Spirit the Son enters into full *koinonia* with all the elect (1 John 1:3), and makes them his body. Thus there is God's new activity in the world in the activity of the church. Thus the mission of the Holy Spirit is the mission of people, of the church. It is not that the church has a mission among other things; but that it *is* mission. It exists because it is sent; the sending word of Jesus constitutes it to be the people who are sent (John 20:21). The unity of those addressed by the sending word is essential in carrying out the mission.

This Christological and pneumatological foundation of mission is in line with the Trinitarian Christology and pneumatology of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. This foundation demands a holistic approach because men and women, their body and soul, and also the whole of their historical existence (including their environment) and their salvation are the result of God's mission. There are many other ways — those of biblical anthropology and/or sociology, or ethics — to appreciate the necessity of a holistic view of mission. But I think that this Trinitarian approach is the most comprehensive one.

I

I have been asked to speak about the relationship of the unity and mission of the church in a European — and within that in a Hungarian — context. In these days we are witnessing in this country a kind of “return to Europe”. It is not because the people have changed their minds; this people have always wanted to be part of Europe since they came here in the tenth century. But history, that is the “powers that be”, has very often cut the natural, historical, cultural and even geographical ties between this country and the rest of Europe. One cannot understand the unity and mission problems in Central Europe without realizing the complexity of the national, religious and cultural situation where people with their own marked tradition have lived side by side, often sharing the same village for many centuries. In the following I shall try to give a short survey of how the Hungarian churches understand their mission task. I base my account on the experiences of my own church, the Reformed Church in Hungary (RCH), with occasional references to the thinking and practice of sister churches in our land. This is a very complex matter both in terms of our relationship with other Christian churches and also in terms of the church-state relationship. Therefore it has to be spoken of in dialectical terms.

The ecclesiastical development in Hungary after the second world war was determined by the following factors: (1) a revival movement in the Protestant churches; (2) the theological renewal, mostly under the influence of Karl Barth’s theology; (3) the participation in the ecumenical movement; (4) last but not least, the post-war political situation in the country and in the world. Each one of these, in dynamic interaction with the others, has played a vital role. Without taking them all into consideration one cannot understand the development which has occurred. Let us take these factors one by one.

1. The revival movement

The Reformed Church in Hungary, after centuries of faithful witness in suffering and endurance, came under the sway of liberal theology during the second half of the 19th century. The proclamation of Jesus Christ either disappeared completely (as in the case of preaching) or was pushed to the periphery (as in the case of the sacraments). The church was regarded as a kind of association for improving morals. Thus along with Christology, ecclesiology also was withering away. *Kulturprotestantismus* prevailed, without any missionary consciousness. The reaction

against this came from various sides: Anglo-Saxon evangelistic movements, the World Student Christian Federation, German pietism, the Calvinism of Abraham Kuyper, Swiss Religious Socialism and other movements all influenced people in the church. Revival became a central issue in the post-second world war situation when the foundations of the old society were shaken. Various types of persons and trends of thought worked together in close co-operation in evangelizing the congregations. The main thrust of their message was the cross of Christ, and the demand for personal decision making, with a heavy emphasis on individual piety at the expense of communal aspects of salvation.

The result: in most congregations groups of people were formed who felt a responsibility for carrying out the command for mission. At that time heated debates were going on in the church concerning the relationship of these groups (fellowships) and the congregation itself (*ecclesiolae in ecclesia* — little churches within the church). The proposed solution of the problem was: the little group, the fellowship is not a faction, but a function of the congregation. This pointed in the right direction, but the Christological base was not elaborated and consequently the ecclesiology was not recovered. On the whole the role of the revival movement is of utmost significance, because it brought about a marked change in the direction of renewal and thereby prepared the church for the difficult days that lay ahead. It also affirmed that the basis of the unity of the church is in Christ.

2. Theological renewal

The Reformed Church in Hungary was very strongly influenced by Karl Barth's theology and by the renewal of biblical research. At the same time Dutch Calvinism was also influential; however, after 1945 Barthian influences prevailed. A dynamic concept of the word of God helped the renewal of preaching and Bible study. There were also some fundamentalists in the church. There was a lively dialogue between revivalists and theologians, and this was not limited to the lecture rooms of institutions of theological learning. Revival meetings and conferences had lectures on various theological topics. This direct interaction between academic theology and church life was a healthy phenomenon.

3. The ecumenical movement

The Reformed Church in Hungary had been involved in the very beginnings of the ecumenical movement and was also a founding member of the World Council of Churches. The ecumenical contacts proved to be

the lifeline for the churches in terms of material help and theological support after the second world war. During the period of total isolation (from about 1949 to 1960) contacts with the WCC were the only contacts with the rest of the body of Christ and with the outside world. In spite of the fact that — particularly before the mid-sixties — such contacts were limited to a very small circle of church leaders, they were helpful.

As is well known, the formation of the various ecumenical bodies coincided with the formation of confessional families and with the strengthening of the particular denominational traditions. It might be due to this fact that the ecumenical era has resulted in the breaking up of Lutheran-Reformed united congregations which had been in existence for a long time (including full, practised intercommunion between these two sister churches). It was due to the intervention of the state in the life of religious associations that the interconfessional Protestant Hungarian branch of the World Student Christian Federation (called the Pro Christo Hungarian Evangelical Christian Association), which had been an important means of mission among young intellectuals, also ceased to exist, and its work could be continued — if at all — only in the congregations of the different denominations.

4. The political situation

People (including a number of church people) who had hoped in a real liberation had to be disappointed again. Hungary has had a long history of democratic aspirations being crushed by foreign powers (here I could name the years 1241, 1526, 1711, 1849, 1919-20). Yalta had decided our destiny again. It was clear for some of those in leading positions of the church that the church would have to exist in a society ruled by the Communist Party, which was deeply distrustful and hostile towards religion. However, many in the church were unable to accept the Marxist thesis that the church's life was dependent upon the society in which it finds itself, and that it would be impossible for the church to exist in a society which was supposed to be liberated from "alienation" and exploitation — the latter being conceived of as the "breeding ground" of religion.

In other words, they were convinced that the church has a mission to fulfill in the new situation. Thus the "vision of the serving church" emerged, which later was called the "theology of the serving church". Trevor Beeson in the first edition of his excellent book on the churches of socialist countries wrote that the theology of the serving church came about as a "compromise" with the situation in which the church found

itself in relation to the state.⁷ Later, as reflected in the second edition of the same book, he accepted that it was not a compromise. Indeed it was not, but rather a rediscovery of an ancient experience of the church which had almost been forgotten: namely, what it means to live in a hostile environment. For some the idea of the serving church was to be the model for carrying on the mission of the church in a new situation which was meant to be extremely hostile, aimed in fact at paralyzing and finally liquidating the church.

No doubt the theology of the serving church has been misused and abused. Bishop László Ravasz, in his memorandum prepared for the WCC Central Committee meeting at Galyatető (Hungary) in 1956, rightly stated that the most important means of carrying out the policy of oppressing the church was through people “planted” within the church or by corrupting those already inside. They were the people who misused the idea of the serving church, shaping and using it as a means of fitting the church into the place allotted for it by the bureaucracy of the party-state, and through the active support of the latter it became a means of oppression. It is no wonder that this reality was and is being criticized more recently also by a new generation of theologians in this country.

As an example of this criticism we may take the case of Bishop Albert Bereczky, who had been very much involved in the revival movement and who had been engaged in evangelizing, and was the pioneer of the “vision of a serving church”. At first he enjoyed the support of revival leaders and preachers, but as society began to be strangled by the secret police his dynamic, personal relationship with the people in the revival movement was cut off. He became isolated and surrounded by people who abused his ideas. During that period he might have committed serious mistakes on such a lonely and untrodden road, but it is difficult to question his Christian commitment. Today it *is* being questioned. A young theologian said at a meeting not long ago that Bishop Bereczky was a false prophet, because he said he was passing on what God had told him — which God had not! And another theologian wrote an article in a secular periodical about the life of the church during the past forty years which he summed up under the title “Untruth and Betrayal”.

In my opinion the “theology of the serving church” should be seen dialectically: it was the expression of the most vital truth of scripture about mission and, at the same time, a reflection of the miseries and inner bleeding of the church.⁸ It did give those of us who were working in congregations the inner support and practical guidance not to expect

support or privilege from the powers that be, and to understand that the church was meant to be the salt of the earth in spite of its being pushed to the periphery of society. So the word of God was preached, and there were people who responded to it. There were, of course, people who did not swim against the stream; but others were only strengthened in their Christian commitment. The most important — and often effective — means of mission at that period was the life of congregations and of individual Christians who witnessed in acts of diakonia and in daily life. This is very near to the ways of witnessing in the Acts of the Apostles (2:42-47).

Thus this period of forty years was a period of testing, in which the gospel of Jesus Christ proved to be the power of God for many in our churches in spite of all the pressures from without and all the rottenness within. In spite of contradictions and restrictions, there was no need to go underground. The life of the church could go on; the church could fulfill, within certain limits, the command for missions. Yet — as time went on — new doors were opened for representing Christ in society in the unity of word and deed. (Diakonia or social work among handicapped and the aged was possible right through this period. Later other fields opened up, such as work with alcohol and drug addicts, deviant youth, etc.) As social-political changes in the land have accelerated recently, the church finds itself in a situation of great challenge for which we are not quite ready in terms of theology, personnel and mission strategy.

Unity for the sake of missions is very much needed. In relation to seeking unity with other churches the record of the last forty years is not very positive. There are two main reasons for this: (1) The churches were occupied with the struggle for survival. Each church was occupied with its own problems. (There were, however, some churches which had had a long history of common witness and co-operation.) (2) Building up any ecumenical or missionary contact between the Roman Catholic Church and Protestant churches was directly or indirectly discouraged by the state as an application of the ancient principle *divide et impera*. Apart from certain individual cases, not much interest was shown in ecumenical co-operation on either side. It is promising that a couple of years ago the highest leadership and certain congregations of the Roman Catholic Church joined in the ecumenical prayer week, which had previously been celebrated together only by Protestant and Orthodox churches. There was a new relevance for the "old" ecumenical recognition that the nearer we get to Christ, the nearer we get to one another. The Christological foundations must be strengthened for the renewal of mission.

II

Having gone through the experience of the past forty years, I can personally bear witness to the fact that — in spite of manifold misuses — the theology of the serving church has helped the church to recover and maintain its identity as the body of Christ in an extremely difficult period. Its basis is Christological: “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). In Christ, God himself — “God of God, light of light, very God of very God” — came to serve humankind. We are served by him, as he gives us in baptism a share in his death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3) and engrafts us into his body, the church.⁹ Again, He, the Bread of Life, feeds us with his body and blood in the eucharist. He gives himself to us in order that we might share his life and ministry and authority. This is the very centre and the mystery of the life of the church.

This understanding has tremendous implications for mission. It means that the church continues the mission of the Son, so far as the church accepts the privilege and duty of existing as his body in the world. In that case it proclaims the gospel not only by verbal proclamation, but in the unity of word and deed, and in the unity of the liturgy of the sanctuary and the liturgy of daily life. The church has the responsibility of — as it were — “living Christ into” the society, by the way its members worship, love one another, bring up their children, relate to others and also contribute towards the upbuilding of civil society through accepting responsibility for social, economic and environmental problems. With this concept of mission comes the re-affirmation of the conviction that without the unity of the people of God — i.e. without parts of the body fulfilling their function towards the *oikodome*, the upbuilding of the whole — mission remains largely ineffective. As long as the denominations are engaged in hunting for one another’s members through marriages and baptisms, our evangelism is largely ineffective. Equally, if we are not involved in the challenges of society we weaken our mission. The tragedy of the Hungarian people in Transylvania (Romania) and the refugees pouring from there presents a challenge to all denominations for common effort.

This view of mission in the Reformed Church of Hungary is not a generally accepted one, particularly not today when — as we have already indicated — the whole “theology of the serving church” is being questioned. Of course the name is not important in itself; but if one thinks of the *pais* (servant) theology of the early church (cf. the eucharistic prayer of Hippolytus, bishop of Rome) then one has to see that there are

elements of solid tradition behind it. Its relevance for today seems to be obvious. The promising process — partly disturbed, partly halted by events beyond the church's control — has to be continued.

The individualistic view of salvation and Christian life has to be further developed through the re-affirmation of Trinitarian Christology. The Holy Trinity is perfect love and participation. The Eternal Son, who shares the glory and power of the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit, became human with the result that "One and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, made known in two natures without confusion, without change, without division, without separation" gives us a share of eternal life (this language of Chalcedon is the expression of the perfect participation of the two natures). The very person of Christ is sharing just as God the Trinity is sharing. This sharing continues in the church, particularly in the eucharist. Sharing, or participation, seems to be one of the most important emphases of Pauline theology as recent scholarship has shown.¹⁰ If we participate in Christ's life, the dynamics of his life will be at work in us. This organic sharing in Christ is logically unimaginable without sharing together with others who are sharing in the same reality. We participate in order that we might let others participate in the gifts and in the gift of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 5:7; 2 Pet. 1:4; 2 Cor. 1:4f.; Heb. 3:14). That is unity and that is mission.

NOTES

¹ See Philip Potter Hrsg., *Das Heil der Welt heute*, Stuttgart, Kreuz Verlag, 1973. For the English (shorter) version see *Salvation Today: Minutes and Report of the Conference of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches*, Geneva, WCC, 1973.

² *Your Kingdom Come: Mission Perspectives*, Geneva, WCC, 1980.

³ *Uniting in Hope: Commission on Faith and Order, Accra 1974*, Faith and Order Paper No. 72, Geneva, WCC, 1975.

⁴ S.J. Samartha ed., *Towards World Community: the Colombo Papers*, Geneva, WCC, 1975; David M. Paton ed., *Breaking Barriers: Nairobi 1975*, London and Grand Rapids, SPCK and Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1975.

⁵ Anne Marie Aagaard, "Missio Dei", in Vilmos Vajta ed., *Das Evangelium und die Zweideutigkeit der Kirche*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973, p.101.

⁶ "Without the sending of the Holy Spirit, the Christ-event remains only a past event." *Ibid.*, p.103.

⁷ Trevor Beeson, *Discretion and Valour*, London, Collins/Fontana, 1974, pp.243f.

⁸ Cf. Istvan Szabo, "A Long Period of Inner Bleeding: the 'Theology of Service' as the Reflection of the Miseries of the Reformed Church in Hungary", in *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte*, 1989, No. 1, pp.191-198.

⁹ Cf. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV.15.1.

¹⁰ E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1977, pp.434ff.

Group Discussion, Plenary Discussion and Plenary Action

Group Report. Unity and Mission

1. Mission and the church

Mission belongs to the very nature of the church. Mission is also the response of a community of faith and love to the action of the Triune God, Creator of all, who calls the community members to be disciples and sends them forth into the world. All aspects of the church's life... worship, witness, service... are shaped by the missionary nature and vocation of its very life.

2. Mission, culture and gospel

Mission has taken various appropriate forms as the church has come to life in various times and places. The problem of cross-cultural mission was already with the first apostles who went from a Hebraic-Hellenistic Jewish context to a Greco-Roman context. Churches in unique cultural contexts are called both to become truly local churches and to be careful not to confuse culture and gospel.

3. Mission and theology

Since mission is the very life of the church embodied in various local cultural contexts, our theological affirmations about mission are to be articulated in a way that speaks to diverse daily experience and life. Theology can revive its relevance as it reflects on situations where mission is happening, as it discerns what God is doing, and so calls ordinary Christians to mission wherever they are.

4. Holistic mission

Despite the different mission priorities of local churches, mission in every context is to be holistic. Mission, that is, is not just giving a cup of

cold water any more than it is just sharing the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. Both of these are integral to mission, as is calling others to become disciples and join in mission to all God's people. Such holistic mission also calls us to Christian solidarity with those to whom we go.

5. Mission and unity (1)

The impulse to mission should be integral to the impulse to unity. We need to return again and again to the text of John 17 to recall that our work towards the visible unity of the church is for the sake of mission: "that the world may believe". While mission may upbuild the unity of the body of Christ, mission has also led to the division of territories among churches and to the imposition of the divisions among churches in the North and West on churches in the South and East. Faithfulness in mission, however, may also be divisive. Moreover, the impulse to unity may subordinate the missionary mandate to the maintenance of ecclesiastical establishment.

6. Mission and unity (2)

The agenda for work on unity and for mission has too often been set by churches in the North and West. We need now to challenge every exclusive agenda, every agenda not attentive to the integrity of the life of local churches in their own situations. As we seek to overcome this exclusivity dividing peoples from North and South, East and West, we must also seek to bring evangelical and ecumenical movements into co-operation in mission.

7. Mission and unity (3)

The exchange of missionaries among churches in North and South, East and West, can nurture a sense of unity in mission, manifesting that even as local churches are bound to their cultures so they are also bound to one another, belong together in "a conciliar fellowship of local churches which are themselves truly united". Serious problems, however, have plagued this possibility in reality. Christians living in the South going to the North as missionaries have encountered racism, have still been subordinated to the priorities of the North, have not been offered hospitality.

8. Mission and unity (4)

Dissension in mission is also still apparent in proselytism. Echoing the recent world conference on mission and evangelism, we may say that the

unhealthy rivalry must be avoided. At the same time we allow that where churches have become ingrown, stagnant, bereft of vision, others may enter and be catalysts for renewal of faith. Yet, even in such situations utmost consideration must be shown to the integrity of all churches and their members who may be involved. This problem of proselytism may profitably be considered in the context of the forthcoming ecclesiology study, since different ecclesiologies may be significant in sorting out the issues, e.g., a territorially based ecclesiology may be much more sensitive, making the charge of proselytism more likely.

9. Unity in mission

We are called to find new, creative ways to talk about the integrity of unity and mission. Even though the twentieth-century ecumenical movement emerged from the missionary movement and chose John 17 as a charter text, it has never been easy to articulate this inter-relatedness. The articulation of this inter-relatedness is a crucial task that awaits consideration in the context not only of the ecclesiology study, but also in the context of understanding "apostolicity", and of relating unity and renewal.

Plenary Discussion and Action

The moderator explained that the report on "Unity and Mission" was a preparatory draft for use by Faith and Order representatives in working with the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism to develop a statement on this theme for the WCC Canberra Assembly in 1991. The text was presented by Melanie May.

Eight persons engaged in discussion of the report. It was emphasized that the fundamental relation of mission and unity — which are both divine gifts — needs to be developed, and that an additional paragraph needs to emphasize that mission not only begins but ends with God: the purpose of mission "is fulfilled in the glory of God". For some the text is still couched in the terms of nineteenth-century thinking about mission, as if all mission were "from North to South, whereas in fact more missionaries go today from South to South"; and several speakers emphasized the difficulties encountered by the many missionaries going today from South to North. Such issues, they felt, require much more work before the text could be sent to the Canberra Assembly.

It was noted that the "exchange" of missionaries, while possible "within evangelical Christianity", is not possible for some traditions for ecclesiological reasons. Finally, some felt that the paper was not sufficiently informed by earlier WCC studies on evangelism, and even seemed "to step back" from earlier WCC statements on witness and proselytism. Material from the Joint Working Group on common witness was suggested as a helpful resource.

The plenary moderator then put the motion:

That the Plenary Commission receive this text as a memorandum for use in our collaboration with CWME in formulating a text on unity and mission for the WCC Assembly in Canberra.

This was approved with no negative votes and no abstentions.

A World Conference on Faith and Order Background Paper

1. In 1984 the Central Committee of the WCC accepted the following recommendation of the Committee on Unit I:

The Committee considered the proposal of the 1982 Lima Commission meeting, welcomed by the 1982 Central Committee and affirmed by the Vancouver Assembly, to hold a world conference on Faith and Order in 1988. After sensing the importance of such a world conference for the ecumenical movement and the necessity to begin now the practical aspects towards its preparation (including dates and finances), the Committee recommends that the Central Committee give its approval for such a world conference on Faith and Order so that the necessary steps for its preparation can be taken in good time.¹

2. Accordingly, the meeting of the Faith and Order Commission at Stavanger in 1985 adopted a "Call to the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order". Such a conference should "provide an opportunity for churches:

- to express the reality of their growing together towards unity;
- to evaluate the current ecumenical situation and their own ecumenical tasks; and
- to reflect together on a renewed vision of their common ecumenical goal and the steps to be taken towards that goal."²

Furthermore, the conference should evaluate the ecumenical impact of the three major Faith and Order studies.³

3. The Standing Commission in 1986 considered again the plan of a world conference. The Commission was not able to accept the proposal to hold a joint world conference together with the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME), but initiated a process of closer co-operation with CWME on the issue "unity and mission". In view of the

number of large WCC conferences between Vancouver 1983 and Canberra 1991 the Standing Commission in 1986 decided "to postpone the plan for a world conference until after the next Assembly".⁴

4. The general secretary of the WCC suggested in 1988 that Faith and Order should seriously consider holding the world conference in about 1993. Consequently the Standing Commission in 1988 began a new reflection on this topic. It was underlined that contrary to the plans in 1985 such a conference should no longer be seen primarily as a moment of "harvesting" the fruits of present Faith and Order studies, but rather as an occasion for a comprehensive theological discourse on the present and future of the ecumenical vision of world Christianity. A number of more detailed suggestions were already made.⁵

5. Finally, the Central Committee of the WCC at Moscow in July 1989 received the report of Unit Committee I in which "it wants to inform the Central Committee that the world conference on Faith and Order is now planned for 1993.... the [Faith and Order] Plenary Commission will present an outline for the conference to the Central Committee next year (1990)".⁶ Such a short outline should be further developed at the Standing Commission meeting in Etchmiadzin, USSR, August 1990.

6. The task of the Commission at Budapest would be to highlight (in following up the 1988 Boston suggestions) some of the possible major theological thrusts of the world conference, its significance for the ecumenical vision of the churches in a pluralistic and emerging scientific-technological world civilization at the end of this century and beyond, and its practical implications (e.g. relation to the Commission, number of participants, and possible place).

NOTES

¹ *Central Committee of the World Council of Churches: Minutes of the Thirty-Sixth Meeting*, Geneva, WCC, 1984, p.39.

² Thomas F. Best ed., *Faith and Renewal*, Faith and Order Paper No. 131, Geneva, WCC, 1986, pp.236-238; the quotation is from pp.236-237.

³ *Ibid.*, p.237.

⁴ *Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Commission: 1986, Potsdam, GDR*, Faith and Order Paper No. 134, Geneva, WCC, 1986, pp.37-39.

⁵ *Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Commission 1988, Boston, USA*, Faith and Order Paper No. 145, Geneva, WCC, 1988, p.116.

⁶ Central Committee of the WCC, *Minutes of the Fortieth Meeting, Moscow, 16-27 July 1989*, Geneva, WCC, 1990, p.87.

Our Future Tasks: Towards a World Conference on Faith and Order

JAN M. LOCHMAN

The main purpose of this short contribution is to endorse the proposal towards a world conference on Faith and Order. It is indeed high time for us to think realistically of such an ecumenical event. Faith and Order has exercised a sort of "heroic asceticism" in this respect; since 1963 there has not been any such conference. Rightly so: in a period of what looks like an age of ecumenical inflation of world conferences, it was justified to practise a certain restraint. On the other hand, taking into consideration how important it is periodically to come together in a broader constituency to present and reshape our agenda, we should not cultivate such an asceticism as our permanent attitude. Many of our previous world conferences have proved to have made an essential contribution to, and enrichment of, the ecumenical movement. Here we may take, as one example, the last world conference, Montreal, and the clarifications achieved in its document on "Scripture, Tradition and Traditions".¹

Twenty-six years after Montreal, the time seems ripe for a new world conference. Now what about the issues which would accompany the preparatory process? Let me tentatively suggest three.

Tolerance and concern for truth

In the next days you will listen to the substantial paper of Wolfhart Pannenberg on future tasks. He concludes with an energetic plea for tolerance. He indicates convincingly the historical guilt of Christian churches in this field, and the chances opened for a truly ecumenical movement in this respect. Facing destructive outbursts of religious and irreligious fanaticism inside and outside our communities, intolerance becomes and remains one of the urgent challenges in our world. At the same time we are challenged in our churches and cultures not only by the

spirit of intolerance, but also — particularly in our Western churches — by the spirit of indifference and relativism with respect to the concern for truth. Both dangers are inter-related; it is not a matter of chance that the renaissance of militant fundamentalism occurs in situations in which the churches and culture fail to win the loyalty of citizens, and particularly the hearts of the young generation, for positive goals and values, leaving them in the mood of spiritual and moral indifference. The theme of tolerance is in a deep sense a dialectical one: zeal for truth without tolerance is blind; tolerance without concern for truth is empty.

Thus Christian witness and theological endeavour should always be a struggle on two fronts: against both intolerance and permissive indifference. This is no doubt an urgent problem in our ecumenical enterprise. We must not underestimate the potential and actual experience of intolerance in our midst. Nor should we cherish tendencies towards spiritual relativism and religious syncretism — sometimes expressed with the best intentions of achieving an unbiased dialogue with people of other commitments. Here the “strategy” of the apostolic church should be remembered; the apostolic missionaries were quite ready to be “Jews to the Jews and Greeks to the Greeks” (1 Cor. 9:20), ready to enter sympathetically into the specific cultural and intellectual situation of their fellow human beings. However, this tolerance never implies any readiness to compromise the name and the truth of Jesus Christ: “For there is no other name under the heaven given among humans by which we could be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Towards an inclusive Trinitarian theology

The ecumenical movement started with a clear Christocentric emphasis. The main themes of the whole series of WCC Assemblies have been indicative of that: “Jesus Christ the Hope of the World”, “... the Light of the World”, “Behold, I make all things new”, “... the Life of the World”. This was fully justified. The unity of the church needs a Christological foundation. However, the Christological basis would be misunderstood if narrowed down to a “Christomonistic” interpretation. Broadening of the Christological basis has proved necessary — in one unmistakable direction, towards “Trinitarian inclusivity”. This was a fundamental contribution of our Orthodox churches. It is valid in context of liturgy and theology. But there are implications also for our ethics.

During a public meeting of our Standing Commission in Boston, I was confronted with a critical question: “How can you reconcile your classical Trinitarian theology within Faith and Order with the social involvement

of the WCC? Aren't you in danger of ecumenical schizophrenia?" Now I believe that there is a vital connection between a Trinitarian vision of God and impulses for participatory involvement in burning questions such as justice, peace, and the integrity of creation. The compassionate God of the Trinity (so different from speculative monotheistic concepts of an authoritarian apathetic absolute) motivates our faith towards compassionate engagement. If anywhere, then it is here that our ecumenical activities, Faith and Order and Life and Work, have their common, integrating basis and focus. The dream of the WCC for a "vital and coherent theology" has its promise precisely in moving towards an inclusive Trinitarian spirituality and thought.

An ecclesiological focus

If I were to identify tentatively the *focus*, the central set of issues for our proposed world conference, I would say: it is the ecclesiological theme — as the fundamental issue of our ecumenical way. Now this is nothing new under the ecumenical sun. Particularly, it is nothing new for Faith and Order. This had been the experience within the Central and Executive Committees of the World Council of Churches. It was Faith and Order which kept reminding us of the importance of ecclesiology under the aspect of unity. In my ecumenical ears still rings a powerful statement by John Deschner, speaking as representative of Faith and Order, during the Utrecht Central Committee meeting in 1972.² I read it again in preparing for Budapest; it was both an encouraging and a frustrating experience. It was encouraging in rediscovering the classical wisdom of Faith and Order. We have achieved substantial ecclesiological clarifications in our history. It was frustrating in realizing again how often we forget about them and act as if we had to start again from scratch — sometimes laboriously "discovering" what has already been discovered.

The preparations for the world conference should make sure that we would try critically and creatively to integrate what has already been elaborated. The spirit of John Deschner and other pioneers of Faith and Order still roams over the waters of Faith and Order. Indeed his body can be touched and shaken. We should and could take advantage of that.

There are other positive assets. In a sense, all three main studies have their ecclesiological implications. This is particularly true of the "Unity of the Church and Renewal of Human Community" study; it is not yet satisfactory, but there is a lot which could be used and built on.

Personally, I would like to share one particular lesson from my own participation in our Faith and Order studies for future ecclesiological

deliberation. I think of another helpful "apostolic reminiscence": it should never be overlooked that in the Creeds, both the Nicene and the Apostles, the message of the church and its unity is placed between the confession of faith in the Holy Spirit and the eschatological proclamation of hope of the resurrection and the life of the world to come. It is good to remember that the Faith and Order concern for unity is by no means a concern for a static and abstract comparative doctrine. It is inseparably connected with the dynamic realities of the Spirit and of the coming kingdom. Now both these motives have been gaining a fresh ecumenical momentum. It was one of the strongest experiences in our study on unity and renewal to witness how strongly the perspective of the kingdom enforced its relevance upon us — more than we had originally planned. At the same time, the whole World Council seems to rediscover the relevance of the Holy Spirit. The theme of Canberra speaks for it. Am I mistaken in thinking that these developments could create some positive presuppositions for a fresh ecclesiological start in the preparatory process towards a world conference on Faith and Order? Perhaps there is an ecumenical *kairos* for such an event.

NOTES

¹ P.C. Rodger & L. Vischer eds, *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order: the Report from Montreal 1963*, London, SCM, 1964, pp.50-61.

² *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. XXIV, 1972, No. 4, pp.447-458.

Group Discussion, Plenary Discussion and Plenary Action

Group Report. Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order: a Recommendation and Some Suggestions

I. History

1. At the Stavanger meeting of the Plenary Commission, in response to actions of the Central Committee and the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, the call for a fifth world conference on Faith and Order was issued, and plans were made for it to be held this year, 1989, somewhere in Asia, Africa or the Pacific.¹ Subsequently, at meetings of the Standing Commission and the Central Committee in 1986, the decision was made to postpone the conference until after the Seventh Assembly in 1991.

2. At the meeting of the Standing Commission in Boston in 1988, the subject was thoroughly discussed, with agreement that the focus should be on ecclesiology, with a view to preparing the churches for their ecumenical calling in the twenty-first century. To this end "the next generation should be in view, and a stronger involvement of theologians from the so-called third and second worlds be foreseen".²

3. At the meeting of the Central Committee in Moscow earlier this summer it was noted that the fifth world conference on Faith and Order was now scheduled to be held in 1993 (thirty years after Montreal).

Recommendation

That the Standing Committee here in Budapest establish a planning committee in nucleus, including three persons to constitute a sub-

committee on finance, and that they be instructed to begin work immediately, in order that they might present proposals to the next meeting of the Central Committee of the WCC in March 1990.

Suggestions to the planning committee

- a) Provisional theme: "Towards a Credible Communion in Faith, Life and Witness";
- b) such a theme would allow for a comprehensive theological discourse on the present and future of the ecumenical vision, while enabling participants to reflect on present Faith and Order studies;
- c) under such a general heading the following areas of study might be addressed: apostolic faith; word and sacraments (BEM); the unity of the church and the renewal of human community; creation; structures of authoritative teaching and decision making; faith and action; ecclesiology; the ecumenical movement in the twenty-first century.

Another possible way of organizing the life of the conference would be under such headings as: the inter-relatedness of faith, life and work; the church as a confessing communion; the church as a eucharistic communion and source of the renewal of society; the church as a community of witness and mission.

II. Participants

4. The first meeting of the new Plenary Commission will, of necessity, be integrated with the fifth world conference.

5. Concerted efforts should be made to involve evangelicals, Pentecostals and others who have, to date, not participated in the work of Faith and Order and, to this end, opportunities should be made for representatives of such groups to participate at the earliest possible point in planning the conference.

6. The churches, who will appoint their representatives, should be asked to do so in such a way as to ensure that voices which have been silent heretofore might be heard, and a new generation of ecumenical leaders, who would carry the work of Faith and Order forward into the next century, could be identified and empowered.

III. Location

7. Since the previous conferences have all taken place in the "first world" (Lausanne, Edinburgh, Lund, Montreal) it seems important to plan for the fifth conference to be held in Asia, Africa or Latin America. Suggestions include: Hong Kong, Singapore and Abidjan (Ivory Coast).

8. Whatever the decision about location, the following factors must be kept in mind:

- a) the host country or a host church must be able to provide some enthusiastic support for the conference;
- b) travel costs must be within reason;
- c) accommodation and technical support must be such as to enable the participants to work efficiently and effectively.

IV. Planning

- a) That preparatory studies be undertaken with other sub-units, and that their co-operation and participation be assured;
- b) that guidelines for participation be established that would ensure the full participation of women and all racial groups;
- c) that work begin early on Bible study and worship materials and the process focused on local and regional study.

NOTES

¹ *Faith and Renewal. Commission on Faith and Order, Stavanger: 1985*, Thomas F. Best ed., Faith and Order Paper No. 131, Geneva, WCC, 1986, pp.236f.

² *Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Commission 1988: Boston, USA*, Faith and Order Paper No. 145, Geneva, WCC, 1988, p.116.

Plenary Discussion and Action

The report, entitled "Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order: a Recommendation and Some Suggestions", was presented by Robert F. Smith.

It was received with wide appreciation. In a discussion in which 16 persons spoke, it was emphasized that the conference should be different from a plenary commission; it should not primarily report on work done, but offer a "new vision" and break "new ground". Faith and Order by-laws require special attention to the "communication of the reports and recommendations of world conferences to the churches"; to enable effective follow-up, participants should represent "authoritative leadership in the churches". Christian councils should be involved, as should Pentecostals and evangelicals, early in the planning process. It was affirmed that the

conference should be broadly inclusive, involving persons and churches "beyond the usual Faith and Order constituency", allowing equal opportunities for women and men and including new styles of work and theological reflection. Special care should be exercised in the use of language, and attention given to the special needs of those new to Faith and Order's work and "style".

Several addressed the issue of the theme and proposed topics of the conference. There was a plea for a more biblical theme, such as "The Truth Will Make Us Free", and it was regretted that the text does not mention the critical topic of "renewal in the life of the church". Other proposals included the relationship between Trinity, church and world (which would be well expressed in a biblical text such as John 15:26-27, John 17:21, or 2 Cor. 13:14); "One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism", or "One Spirit, One God, One Body", from Ephesians 4; the issues of the ordained ministry and the priesthood in the one church; or "a self-critical examination of Faith and Order methodology". Whatever the theme, it should be sufficiently focused (as in the last world conference in Montreal in 1963) as to yield some concrete results within the time available: the experience in Budapest was proving that serious reflection upon such topics indeed demands substantial time.

It was suggested that the section on planning be enlarged to give substantial attention to worship, with music, for example, reflecting a broad cultural diversity; and that the section on other possible ways of "organizing the life of the conference" should include the theme of "the church as a community of the Holy Spirit". No objection being registered, both suggestions were taken "as reflecting the mind of the Commission".

The moderator then moved that:

The Plenary Commission receive the report of the group and adopt the recommendation "that the Standing Commission here in Budapest establish a planning committee in nucleus, including three persons to constitute a sub-committee on finance, and that they be instructed to begin work immediately, in order that they might present proposals to the next meeting of the Central Committee of the WCC in March 1990".

The motion was approved unanimously, with no abstentions.

Appendices

Appendix 1

By-laws of the Faith and Order Commission

1. Meaning

In these by-laws:

The Commission means the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches and includes both the Plenary Commission and the Standing Commission.

The Officers of the Commission mean the Moderator and Vice-Moderators of the Plenary Commission and Standing Commission.

The Secretariat means the Secretariat of the Commission on Faith and Order.

The Council means the World Council of Churches.

The Assembly means the Assembly of the World Council of Churches.

The Central Committee means the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches.

2. Aim and functions

The aim of the Commission is to proclaim the oneness of the church of Jesus Christ and to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and in common life in Christ, in order that the world may believe.

The functions of the Commission are:

- a) to study such questions of faith, order and worship as bear on this task and to examine such social, cultural, political, racial, and other factors as affect the unity of the church;
- b) to study the theological implications of the existence and development of the ecumenical movement and to keep prominently before the Council the obligation to work towards unity;

- c) to promote prayer for unity;
- d) to study matters in the present relationship of the churches to one another which cause difficulties or which particularly require theological clarification;
- e) to study the steps being taken by the churches towards closer unity with one another and to provide information concerning such steps;
- f) to bring to the attention of the churches, by the best means available, reports of Faith and Order meetings and studies;
- g) to provide opportunities for consultation among those whose churches are engaged in union negotiations or other specific efforts towards unity.

The Commission, in pursuing its work, observes the following principles:

- i) It seeks to draw the churches into conversation and study but recognizes that only the churches themselves are competent to initiate steps towards union, by entering into negotiations with one another. The work of the Commission is to act, on their invitation, as helper and adviser.
- ii) It will conduct its work in such a way that all are invited to share reciprocally in giving and receiving and no one is asked to be disloyal to his convictions nor to compromise them. Differences are to be clarified and recorded as honestly as agreements.

3. Organization

- a) The Faith and Order Commission is constitutionally responsible to the Central Committee. It is part of Programme Unit I on Faith and Witness together with the Sub-units on Church and Society, on World Mission and Evangelism, and on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths.
- b) The Faith and Order Commission shall consist of a Plenary Commission and a Standing Commission.
- c) The Plenary Commission will have as its primary task theological study, debate, and appraisal. It will initiate the programme of the Faith and Order Commission, lay down general guidelines for it, and share in its communication to the churches.
- d) The Standing Commission will have as its task to implement the programme, to guide the staff in the development of Faith and Order work, and to make administrative decisions on behalf of the Faith and

Order Commission, to supervise the ongoing work and to act on behalf of the Commission in between meetings of the Plenary Commission. It shall represent the Commission in relation to the Programme Unit I Committee and Council generally.

- e) The Plenary Commission shall consist of not more than 120 members (including the Officers and the other members of the Standing Commission). The Standing Commission shall consist of a Chairperson and not more than 30 other members.
- f) Both the Plenary Commission and the Standing Commission shall be appointed by the Central Committee, in the following manner:
 - i) The Plenary Commission, at its last meeting before the Assembly, shall appoint a Nominations Committee to prepare a list of names for the election of a new Standing Commission by the Central Committee.
 - ii) The Central Committee shall appoint the Moderator and the members of the Standing Commission, who hold office until the following Assembly of the World Council of Churches. The Standing Commission shall elect not more than four Vice-Moderators from among its members. The Chairperson and the Vice-Chairpersons shall be the Officers of both the Standing Commission and the Plenary Commission.
 - iii) The Standing Commission shall submit to the Central Committee a list of candidates from which shall be chosen the members of the Plenary Commission, who will hold office until the next Assembly.
 - iv) Vacancies on the Plenary Commission and the Standing Commission shall be filled by the Central Committee on the nomination of the Standing Commission.
- g) Since the size of the Commission precludes full representation of member churches of the Council, appointment shall be made on the basis of personal capacity to serve the purposes of the Commission. At the same time, care shall be taken to secure a reasonable geographical and confessional representation of churches on the Commission and among the Officers and Secretaries. The Plenary Commission should include in its membership a sufficient number of women, young and lay persons.
- h) Persons who are members of churches which do not belong to the Council but which confess Jesus Christ as God and Saviour are eligible for membership of the Commission.

- i) Before any candidate is nominated for appointment by the Central Committee, steps shall be taken to ensure that his name is acceptable to the church to which he belongs. A member should be willing to accept some responsibility for communication between the Faith and Order Commission and his church and ecumenical bodies in his country.

4. The Secretariat

- a) The Standing Commission, after due consultation between the Officers of the Commission and the General Secretary of the Council, shall propose for nomination the members of the Secretariat for appointment and reappointment by the Central Committee or the Executive Committee of the Council.
- b) A sufficient number of Secretaries shall be appointed for the adequate performance of the work of the Commission.
- c) The Secretariat shall maintain full consultation and co-operation with the General Secretariat of the Council, with Programme Unit I, and as required with other Units of the Council.
- d) The Secretariat shall be responsible for ensuring the continuation of the work of the Plenary Commission, in accordance with the policy agreed at meetings of the Plenary Commission or Standing Commission. To this end the Secretariat shall keep in regular contact with the Officers and other members of the Commission.

5. World conferences

- a) World Conferences on Faith and Order may be held when, on recommendations of the Standing Commission acting in the name of the Commission, the Central Committee so approves.
- b) The invitation to take part in such Conferences shall be addressed to churches throughout the world which confess Jesus Christ as God and Saviour.
- c) Such Conferences shall consist primarily of delegates appointed by the churches to represent them. Youth delegates, special advisers, and observers may also be invited.
- d) Careful attention shall be given to the communication of the reports and recommendations of World Conferences to the churches.

6. Meetings of the Commission

- a) The Plenary Commission shall meet at least once between Assemblies, but may be convened at any time by the Standing Commission after clearance with the Executive Committee of the Council.
- b) The Standing Commission shall normally meet every year but may be convened at any time by the Moderator in consultation with other Officers of the Commission or at the request of not less than one-third of the members of the Standing Commission.
- c) The Secretariat will be responsible for giving due notice of meetings of both the Plenary Commission and the Standing Commission, for keeping its minutes and other records, and, in consultation with the Moderator, for preparing its agenda.
- d) A member of the Plenary Commission, by advance notice to the Secretariat, may name a proxy acceptable to his church to represent him at any meeting at which he is unable to be present.
- e) A member of the Standing Commission may name a person to represent him at any meeting at which he is unable to be present but such a person may not vote.
- f) Other persons may be invited to be present and to speak, if the Moderator so rules, but not to vote. In particular, in order to secure representation of its study groups, members of these may be invited to attend either body as consultants.
- g) The Moderator of the Commission or, in his absence, one of the Vice-Moderators, shall preside at such meetings. In the absence of these officers, the meeting shall elect its own Moderator. One-third of the total membership (including proxies) shall constitute a quorum.
- h) The Commission shall normally conduct its business according to the rules of procedure of the Central Committee. Questions arising about procedure shall be decided by a majority vote of those present and voting.
- i) If, at any time when it is inconvenient to hold a meeting of the Standing Commission, the Moderator and Secretariat shall decide that there is business needing immediate action by that Commission, it shall be permissible for them to obtain by post the opinions of its members, and the majority opinion thus ascertained shall be treated as equivalent to the decision of a duly convened meeting.

7. Faith and Order studies

- a) The Standing Commission, giving due attention to the general guidelines laid down by the Plenary Commission (see 3c), shall formulate and carry through the study programme.
- b) The Secretariat, as authorized by the Standing Commission, shall invite persons to serve on the study groups and consultations. They shall pay particular regard to the need to involve members of both the Plenary Commission and the Standing Commission in the study programme, whether by membership of study group, consultations, or by written consultation. Due regard shall be paid to special competence in the fields of study concerned, and to the need for the representation of a variety of ecclesiastical traditions and theological viewpoints.
- c) Study groups shall normally include both those who are, and those who are not, members of the Commission. They may also include persons who do not belong to member churches of the Council.
- d) In planning such studies, all possible contact shall be sought or maintained with allied work already in progress under such auspices as those of regional or national councils or of individual churches, or of ecumenical institutes and theological faculties or departments.
- e) Study groups shall prepare reports, as requested, for discussion in the Commission, at World Conferences on Faith and Order, or at Assemblies. Any such report should bear a clear indication of its status.
- f) The publication of such reports and of other Faith and Order papers shall be the responsibility of the Secretariat, provided that adequate financial resources are available.

8. Finance

- a) The normal working expenses of the Commission and its Secretariat shall be borne by the general budget of the Council. The Secretariat and the Standing Commission shall be responsible for drawing up an annual budget in conformity with the financial procedures of the World Council of Churches, and for submitting it through normal Council procedures, to the Finance Committee of the Central Committee.
- b) There shall be a financial report annually to the Standing Commission.

- c) The Standing Commission shall be responsible for deciding the allocation of available funds to particular studies, and the Secretariat shall communicate such decisions to the officers of study groups.

9. Revision of by-laws

These by-laws may be amended by the Standing Commission subject to the approval of the Central Committee. Any proposed amendment must be circulated in writing to the members of the Plenary Commission not less than three months before the meeting at which it is to be considered for adoption and, for adoption, requires the approval of two-thirds of the members of the Standing Commission present and voting.

10. Communication with the churches

The Plenary Commission and the Standing Commission shall be concerned to facilitate communication with the churches. They shall make generally available results of studies where such studies are formally communicated to the churches through the Central Committee. In certain studies, the Commission may invite a formal response from the churches.

Appendix 2

Members of the Faith and Order Commission and the Secretariat of the Commission

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Appendix 3

Contributors

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This official record of the 1989 meeting of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches is an important resource for understanding the churches' search today for greater visible unity, a common expression of their faith, and a vital Christian witness in the world.

The Commission — perhaps the most diverse and broadly representative theological forum in the world — gathered with consultants, liaison officers, and a group of younger theologians, in the vibrant context of Hungary in August 1989. It reviewed and planned for further work on its major programmes on BEM, apostolic faith, and unity and renewal, as well as its ongoing concerns for the united and uniting churches, the week of prayer and spirituality, and bilateral (interchurch) discussions.

Presented here are reflections on the style and substance of Faith and Order's work; plans for new approaches to ecclesiology, and unity in relation to mission; work towards a fresh statement, in preparation for the WCC Canberra assembly, on the unity we seek; and continued planning towards a fifth world conference on Faith and Order.

The Rev. Dr *Thomas F. Best* is on the staff of the Commission on Faith and Order, World Council of Churches.

